Calliope

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calliope *kal<e>i:opi. U.S. (Gr. Kallioph)*

(beautiful-voiced), the ninth of the Muses,
presiding over eloquence and heroic poetry.

1. An instrument consisting of a series of
steam-whistles toned to produce musical notes,
played by a keyboard like that of an organ;

2. attrib. calliope hummingbird,
a hummingbird, sellula ***calliope***, of the
Western United States and Mexico.
Oxford English Dictionary

Before The Tournament

Elise G.Rossi

Eight empty fields, on both sides stand
The soldiers all waiting for their first command.
The kings standing center, surrounded by knights,
Everything cut into sharp blacks and whites.
All in their place, not a man out of line,
Foot soldiers in front, all others behind.
Everyone still, and in all eight the same,
As every piece waits to begin the Chess Game.

Coagulation

Carina Yun

The quickening of salt water pours over me
as we ride the white mammoth ferry.
Just like tourists, the flash from our Nikon leaves
behind memories of our crimson eyes as we go.
My blouse looks to be leaking;
you always did say I sweat too much.
My lungs gasping for air as the fleet rocks,
all the while yearning to smoke Marlboro.
My stomach coagulates within me
as if I've drunk old goat milk.
I even threw up Cheerios on you after we stepped off.
I stared, as you parted my dangly wet hair
brushing the vomit off my cheeks.
I stared, as you took the sleeves of your sopping shirt
to swab the salt from the corners of my mouth.
I stared, as you smiled with your top now covered with my drool.

The Ghosts of the Old South

Dawnielle Rae Woodman

As I sit with my brother Alex in the car, driving down the long country roads I know so well, I can't tell if it is anxiety or excitement I feel in my belly. I look at the clock, as if that will tell me how I'm feeling. Its 1:30 in the morning, but exhaustion is nowhere to be seen. It feels weird to be in the driver's seat, and I realize that this is the first time I have ever actual driven to my grandparent's house. I can't see a thing past the car's head lights, but I already know from years of traveling down this road where everything is. Nothing has changed out here; not in the 10 years that I've been coming here.

This was not Alex's idea, to go visit all of the places we used to frequent when we lived in this area, before he leaves for New York, and I no longer have an excuse to come down here.

"I'm sorry for dragging you out here," I say, mostly to make conversation.

"Na, it's cool," he says absentmindedly. I know he doesn't really care about seeing this place.

"I'm glad we're doing this though," I say, turning the wheel suddenly to avoid hitting the dead opossum that is scattered over the road. "Glad I missed that," I say, but I know Alex won't respond. I can tell that he is already lost in his own world.

I slow down as we approach the house, and turn carefully onto their driveway. The gravel crunches loudly and I jump slightly at the noise, quickly turning off the headlights.

"Why did you turn off the lights? I can't see anything!"

"I came here to see their house, not them," I say, putting the car in park. Alex laughs next to me, but I can barely hear him as nostalgia and anxiety consume my thoughts. We just sit at the end of the quarter-mile driveway and stare into the darkness. I can barely make out the shape of the long ranch-style house in the distance, but in my mind I see everything perfectly. I see it like it was the blindingly bright and torturously hot summer day that I have associated with this place. The front yard always had to look as perfect as possible, with short, dry brown grass, and a few maple trees haphazardly thrown about for appearance. I never really cared for the front yard, I almost never spent any time there, I was almost always behind the house.

I have a wave of nostalgia as I remember the backyard, the only area of their property I really knew and loved. How the sudden hill sloped down littered with pine trees and bumpy roots. I used to love walking in the shady area, looking at the new marsh that had been created by beavers damming up the small stream that ran in the very back of their property. The whole back yard was so much wilder than the front, and I snicker inwardly as I think of how much Grandpa must hate that. He is so obsessed with looking perfect and maintaining his image that he must loathe the untamable backyard. There were small buildings built all over the area where Grandpa had tried in vain to control at least part of the land. There were two chicken coups that were empty because the foxes had eaten them all, the old shed that used to contain hay for the goats and now housed nothing but snakes, and the lean-to that now protected the pale blue tractor from the rain, but had once been converted into a small stable for Topper, the quarter horse.

Grandpa only got the animals because he was trying to control the land and make it perfect. The goats and horse were just ways to try and keep the grass cut cheaply,

but he sold them once he realized that it would be easier to just mow the grass on his tractor than to pick up after the animals. Him and Grandma were never really animal people, always getting pure-breed dogs that were ill-suited for the extreme Virginia weather. Never let in the house, the dogs usually had fairly short lives or were sold when they became "too expensive". Most of their life was spent either shaking in the cold or panting under the hot sun when their arctic fur was much too thick to keep them cool.

I loved their dogs though, and I would walk in the back yard with them, thinking about the battle that took place on the land almost a hundred years before. Three different Civil War battles had been fought on this land, and even though my grandparents would deny it, the past battles could still be felt when you stood on this land. There is no physical evidence of the war left, save for the occasional bullet that we dug up, but there was a feeling of despair in the air, a melancholy cloak that seemed to drape over us whenever we were there. Mom had once said that when a land absorbs that much blood, it will take more than just a hundred years to be at peace again. I stayed outside and played with the dogs as much as I could when I stayed with them because as much as I loathed being outside in the heat, being inside was much worse.

The house was rarely a relief from the heat; Grandma always kept the temperature high, even during the summer, and the constant hissing of the humidifiers not only kept the air thick and moist, but made the whole place smell like medicine and sickness. All of the rooms were unnaturally dark given how bright it was outside, and even though it felt like I was constantly cleaning the house for them, without the stagnant inside air let out, or the temperature turned down, it always felt dirty and musty in there.

It wasn't just the house that I disliked, it was dealing with my grandparents too, as I got older. I hated being told what to do and how to do it, unable to express myself, or show my grandparents who I really was, for fear of retaliation. Grandma made sure to tell me how to be "lady-like" and a "woman of faith", all of which were a direct contradiction to my hot-headed, loud nature. I was unable to do anything I wanted, which included choosing my own faith, or how to express it. I would have to listen to Grandpa's long prejudiced rants layered with sexism and the occasional racist remark. I would be forced to dress up for church every weekend, or sing in the choir so that Grandpa and Grandma could be the proud grandparents of a gifted and spiritual granddaughter, the perfect accessory to the Head Deacon.

Grandpa didn't want anything to do with me once I decided that my faith was my choice, and that I wasn't going to a church that spouted hateful rhetoric. Just like the goats, the horse, and that wild backyard, he discarded me to the side.

As I sit in the car, I think about those soldiers, the rebels fighting to save their antiquated Antebellum culture as the modern world crashed around them. I think about Grandpa's intolerance and stubbornness, unwilling to change his ways. I realize that this place is still haunted by the Old South, not by the men that died here, but by the people who still occupy the land.

"Why did you want to see this place anyway?" Alex asks, breaking my train of thought. "You hated this place even more than me."

"I don't hate the place…" I say, getting lost in my own thoughts again, as I put the car in reverse, and back out of the driveway. "I guess just once I wanted to leave this place on my own." I say it with a small smile.

A Hive with Human Scent

Sunyong Chung

All living things fight for space, water, food or some other need, while all parents who are in Korea fight for private education for their children. The cost of it is often beyond the average family's ability to pay. Parents are facing higher expenses for their children's private education, and so are my parents. They are a couple working together for a living. They worked hard, thus they do not exist in my childhood memory.

Because my parents were stuck in society, a place to conquer or to die, my grandparents had to feed me and house me. My grandmother carried me piggy-back. My grandparents had seven daughters, who are people of strong individuality, and one son, who is like a sheep to the slaughter in front of his sisters. They watched each of them grow up, so they were good at nurturing. Everything I saw, heard, and learned was different from my peers. Sometimes, before I knew it, I would use an old man's speech, so my friends usually did not get what I meant.

My grandparents often used to tell me great old-time stories. My grandmother told love stories. Seeing that they had eight children, they used to do the fire of love. I would like to feel their kind of intense love, if only once. My grandfather told North Korean stories. He is from North Korea and he came to South Korea alone when he was 15. Sometimes he talked of the pain of being separated from loved ones still in the North - a pain nearly all North Korean refugees share. He said North Koreans are the same human beings as South Koreans, so we should see North Koreans as brothers. He went through all sorts of hardships in childhood, and he insisted on keeping old things. Old customs are well preserved in my grandparent's neighborhood. My grandparents are brilliant storytellers and I miss the evenings we spent talking about old times.

Although we were busy bees, we always got together whenever there were family functions. After gathering at the hive, we undid our burdens and caught up with one another. We shared all sorts of emotions, from stress to gossip. Though there was barely any space to sit at the table, we all sat together and shared a hearty meal. This meal tasted like joy, anger, sorrow, and pleasure. We always lost track of time as we were having so much fun. Our hive vibrated with our laughter. We could smell the human affection there. We did not seek happiness, happiness knocked on our door.

Time is a luxury that we do not have today; people are too busy with their own lives. However, whenever I go to my grandparent's house, it is as if time has frozen. My grandparent's rural neighborhood has been going through redevelopment. It is sad to see construction companies trying to demolish and redevelop my grandparent's neighborhood. It seems they are after my childhood memories and last haven. They are trying to speed up time and make everything into a modern and hectic world. In a society where modern and advanced things are preferred, I sometimes want to hold on to the old-fashioned ways.

Calliope Second Prize 2013 - Fiction

A Fig for Jesse

Laura Genuario

Regardless of the weather, Jesse walked precisely fourteen blocks every day during his lunch hour. On his daily promenade along Prince Street in Old Town Alexandria, he examined the fig tree on the south-east corner of South Columbus Street. Bagged lunch in hand, his route never varied - his only deviation was his choice of lunch stop. There was the park bench shaded by towering gingko trees two blocks into his walk (his first choice in spring and summer, but frequently occupied); the rugged stone steps at the office building on South Fayette (unsheltered and preferable on cooler days); or his spot of last resort, his apartment at South Henry.

The fig tree was crouched behind a black iron fence. It resembled less a tree than a many-legged creature emerging upside-down from the ground; its spindly jointed branches formed elbows whose skinny arms reached with hand-shaped leaves not toward the sky but confusedly in every direction. When months ago, he discovered what fruit it bore, he watched it carefully for signs of ripening pods, and by August, there were many of them - dark and ripe and ready for plucking. On the ground had fallen some rotting ones.

On this hot summer day, Jesse paused behind the fence and stared at the tree, as people passed behind him. "But he did," a man was saying. "No, it's not in his nature," a woman replied. "We'll know by the end of the day. Then you'll see I'm right."

Jesse continued to the next corner at Washington Street, the farthest point on his walk. A woman came and stood alongside him. He was looking eastward, at the statue memorializing the confederate dead, when a flash of yellow skirt caused him to glance down at brown-sandaled feet and up at her face. "Oh man, what a hot day," she remarked. Sweat beaded her temples and wetted the roots of her long, dark hair. "You're right about that," Jesse replied. She smiled, and he saw his own face reflected on her dark sunglasses between the two suns of the sky.

A bee buzzed past Jesse's left ear and began a lazy, humming orbit. The traffic light changed, and all three moved as one: the billowing skirt seemed to pull the group along while a slight breeze nudged them from behind. They pivoted from north to west and waited for the light in its timed cycle, the bee continuing its buzzing. Jesse monitored its movement and prepared to swat at it.

"It's a beautiful day for a walk, despite the heat," the woman remarked, remaining by his side while they crossed the road. The bee finally flew off. She motioned to his bag. "Going to eat your lunch somewhere?"

Jesse gestured with it. "Yes, I'll stop at Fayette. There's no shade, but the concrete will be warm. And I usually have a few leftover crumbs for the birds."

"Mind if I tag along?" she asked.

"Sure. I mean no, I don't mind. I'm Jesse."

"My name is Eva."

"I have enough for two, Eva, if you'd care to join me. Only one bottle of water, though." He wondered if he should offer to share that as well.

"I have a warm Perrier," she said, lifting her purse.

"OK then, we're set," Jesse said, and they continued westward along Prince Street, in silence, until they reached South Fayette where they seated themselves on the edge of a wide stone step. From his paper bag, Jesse brought out a large white linen napkin

which he spread carefully between him and Eva, then placed upon it baguettes of meat and cheese, a plastic bowl of pasta salad, a zippered bag of cut-up fruit, a heavy white paper plate, a bottle of water, and a sterling silver fork.

"Oh my, aren't you fixed for a feast," Eva remarked as she took out her green water bottle.

"I made the sandwiches this morning, and these are just leftovers," he explained, shaking the salad and the fruit onto the plate. He offered her the fork. "You go ahead and dig in. I'll eat whatever you don't feel like finishing." Eva made appreciative noises as she ate. People climbed up and down the steps beside them, and birds hopped by, just out of reach. Jesse brushed away crumbs from his khaki trousers, tugged at his blue necktie, and with a handkerchief, blotted sweat from his brow.

"Do you work nearby?" Eva asked.

"Yes, just three blocks west, at the railroads association." He took a bite of his sandwich.

"But you like to walk at lunchtime."

"Mmhmm." He chewed and swallowed. "I walk down to that corner where I met you and then come back."

"I know." She looked like she was telling a joke and was ready with the punch line.

"Oh?"

"I work in the building you pass every day at Columbus. Legal offices. My window looks out on the fig tree you've been eyeing so lasciviously for a while. Unless you're looking at me, in which case I must admit I'm flattered."

"Oh." Jesse blushed.

"Would you like to stop by after work? I'll take you behind the fence where you can taste the forbidden fruit. I hadn't really noticed the tree until you came along, but there seem to be more than enough figs for two." Jesse had already peeked at her left hand and had seen she wore no ring.

"I do like fresh figs," he confessed.

"It's a date. A date for figs, haha." They both laughed.

When Cooler Heads Can't Be Found

Douglas Edward Freeley

There can't be enough said or written about the special feelings of a new National Hockey League season. The festivities around the league are televised for everyone to enjoy, and if you get the chance to make your way downtown to Chinatown for the Washington Capitals' celebration, it's a wonderful experience. My father and I have enjoyed opening nights of the Capitals' season for the last five years, and it never gets old. We have our favorite restaurants downtown, like Matchbox, where Chelsea knows we like Egginberg Pils and meaty pizza, or Fadó, with Darren, the bartender who greets us with a simple "It's cold out there," and two shots of Jameson. Inside the arena, it's more of the same with the security teams, food and beverage, employees and ushers, all there to experience it with us, while the building beams with shared pride for the city. This pride and the whole experience were put on hold by the negotiations of the NHL's Collective Bargaining Agreement. The recent NHL lockout has made me and many others consider how extensive the financial damage to cities and businesses throughout the league was, and whether the players' association or the NHL's team owners fully realized the effect that the lockout could have?

The lockout came about when the previous collective bargaining agreement between the NHL Players' Association and the Owners group from 2004 expired. The negotiations were started last year to decide on many financial issues that the league faces, including profit splitting between owners and players, profit sharing for small-market teams, salary cap and length of the new contract. What made the negotiations even more difficult was the fact that the league made record profits in 2011-2012, and the players found the 43% they received to be unfair. They wanted a clean 50/50 split. The arguments led to a lockout which cancelled the start of the season, which then cancelled the Winter Classic outdoor game and the All Star game in mid-January. Everyone was feeling the impact at this point.

The impact of this financial debacle was felt from Vancouver, BC to Sunrise, FL. Throughout the league there are businesses that have set up shop around arenas to reap the benefits of a professional team. What may not have been considered are the markets without the luxury of an NBA team that shares the arena with the NHL. In Buffalo, NY, they have the Bills and the Sabres. With the Bills out of the playoffs and no hockey to speak of, the city was feeling the hit. Restaurant owners, blue-collar workers and suppliers were all being impacted.

Another market that was reeling from the work stoppage was Columbus, OH. Their team, the Blue Jackets, has never been a powerhouse in the league, but they have a great deal of fans, mainly because it's the only game in town. The 2003-2004 lockout was devastating for their Arena District. One of the town's newspapers wondered if the Blue Jackets, with image problems of its own, could survive what fans see as greedy NHL owners.

The outlook of there being a season this year was grim when the owners turned down a proposal by the players for a 50/50 split. Many fans are torn between their love of the game and its players, and the understanding that the team and its players are owned and under contract directly with the owners, giving the owners control over all aspects of operation. The confusion comes when the Players Association gets involved, as any union involvement in industry can muddy the waters of contract disputes. What

I find most frustrating about this work stoppage is the fact that the two sides finally settled on a 50/50 split, even after all of the arguing and bad-mouthing of the other side. They could have saved a great deal of time and money if the deal had been settled on before the season started. It should never have reached the point of desperation.

The league will have a great deal of ground to make up in the coming season if they hope to maintain the viewership and merchandise sales that they worked so hard to achieve since the last lock-out. The residual effects of the stoppage will be difficult to compute. How do you figure out how many people decided not to go to a hockey game because of the contract dispute? The only numbers that may be shared will be the season ticket sale's decreases, or the fans that didn't renew their tickets between last season and this season. Season ticket sales are a good barometer for a team's popularity within a city.

I will still attend opening night in Chinatown with my pop. We will still have beer and pizza at Matchbox, and if it's not too late, we're still going to visit Darren, at Fadó, for a pint of Guinness. Just as the league has some catching up to do with fans, we have our own to do. I feel for the employees affected by this contract dispute, and I can only hope the league has learned its lessons. Everyone involved in this season's late start has born some level of burden, whether it is emotional or financial, and we can only hope that we will avoid it in 2022, when the next negotiations come around.

Calliope Third Prize 2013 - Poetry

Wait For Me, I'll Be There

Laura Crepeau

Hoping, for once, you'll be early,
Knowing full well you'll be late,
With my book and my fourth cup of coffee,
I sit. And I wait.

The waitress sighs, and averts her eyes,
Her once-friendly smile turned to slate.
While I contemplate ordering cheesecake,
I sit. And I wait.

Now what has all this waiting taught me?
That I'm a fool, an optimist, or maybe a saint?
It's taught me this:
I don't know where you are.
I only know where you ain't.

Intronaut

Christopher Trebing

A soft mention of an unspeakable quest
A trip of knowledge, it must be stressed
A return to things of old
Of many a wonder yet to behold

A journey deep into the mind
An attempt at the secrets of mankind
Long have the provisions been made
A journey of finality into the head will crusade

The cryptic causation of greed and desire
The untold truths steeped in the mire
All soon to be revealed
The arcane of the brain about to yield

I venture deep within my soul
With lantern, map, and blankets roll
In the depths of caverns ghostly dark
I find not much beyond remark

A Leader of Men

Evan McLeese

A commanding procession of vehicles motors down a rain-drenched Pennsylvania Avenue. Police cruisers and motorcycles lead and trail the caravan, sandwiching armored Chevy Suburbans and sharp, black sedans. A fleet of Cadillac limousines advance at the heart of the cavalcade – Tiny American flags flap in the wind. One of the limos contains a leader of men, the most powerful officer in the world: The President of the United States of America.

The President stoically gazes out of the window, contemplating a host of issues facing the administration. The leader's face is stern yet kind, framed by a coif of meticulously groomed jet-black hair. The chief executive's slight frame is draped by an exquisitely-tailored Calvin Klein suit. It was perfectly complimented by a dignified pair of handmade Gucci shoes. The commander in chief is chewing on an unlit cigar and leafing through a host of briefs as the motorcade begins up a long driveway. The ever-slowing motorcade comes to a halt in front of the presidential entrance to the White House. Secret service agents pour out of the vehicles. A high-ranking agent opens the President's door and begins to unfurl an umbrella. A shiny shoe hits the slick asphalt and is greeted with an unpleasant splash. The agent extends a hand to aid the President's exit and asserts, "Right this way Madame President."

Does this scenario seem far-fetched? In the year 2012, should it? In "Invisible Women", Yun Yung Choi recalls that while growing up in Korea, the most she could hope to be was the wife of the president. Is that all little American girls can hope to be now? Or are we finally ready in this country for a female president? Females are rising to highest seats of government all over the world. Right here in America, we have women in power positions in every branch of government, but a female has yet to break through the glass ceiling and ascend to the presidency. Why is it that we have yet to elect a female president? Do we believe that women could not handle the job? Do many of us view women purely as sexual objects, and are unwilling to cast a vote for a female? Whatever may be the case, it is high time we start taking our cues from the rest of the free world and stop acting like an oppressive sexist regime. We need to realize that the best man for the job might just be a woman.

There are currently over twenty female leaders of national governments. These are not dull third world nations, either. The list includes industrialized global players such as Germany, Australia, Switzerland, Denmark, Finland, Iceland, and Brazil. In the last thirty years, we have seen a global boom in female leaders that is just now really starting to fully blossom. In 1954 Sükhbaataryn Yanjmaa became the world's first acting female head of state when her husband, Mongolia's leader, died. But it was not until 1980, in Iceland, that Vigdis Finnbogadottir became the world's first democratically elected female president. Serving in office until 1996, she still holds the title of longest serving elected female head of state at sixteen years. Ireland displayed forward thinking in 1997 when it became the first country to elect two female presidents in a row, when Mary McAleese succeeded Mary Robinson. Even Germany, which is not classically known for being the most open-minded country, joined the female revolution when they elected Angela Merkel as their first female Chancellor in 2005. In 2007, Merkel became president of the European Council and chaired the G8, the second woman after

Margret Thatcher to do so. A recent Forbes list named Merkel not only the most powerful woman in the world, but also the 4th most powerful person in the world, "as head of Europe's most vibrant economy…and as the de facto leader of the EU." But for a truly vivid illustration of progressive thinking regarding female leaders, we must venture back to Iceland. In 2009 Jóhanna Sigurõardóttir became the world's first openly lesbian world leader, and even married another woman while in office. It may be some time before we see anything of the sort in the United States, but while America may not be quite that enlightened at this point, we are not completely devoid of female leadership.

From Hilary Clinton to Nancy Pelosi, Washington has seen its fair share of female heavy hitters in recent times. There are currently ninety-two women serving in the 112th Congress: seventy-five in the House and seventeen in the Senate. This falls just short of the record ninety-five women who served in the 111th Congress. There are six female governors, and three Supreme Court justices. Seven women serve in the Obama cabinet, including the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Homeland Security, and the Ambassador to the United Nations. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, clearly one of the most high profile and powerful female politicians, is just four seats away from the Presidency. Current House Minority Leader Nancy Pelosi served as the first female Speaker of the House from 2006-2010, and stood just second in line to the Presidency. It is plain to see that women have become more prominent in the political landscape lately, but have not been able to rise all the way up the ladder. So what is it that makes us so reluctant to vote a woman into office, and join the rest of the globe in this feminine frenzy of front office forerunners?

A 2006 CBS News poll found that 92% of Americans said they would vote for a woman for president if she were qualified. That same poll found that 55% of those polled felt that America was ready for a woman president. Yet when the 2008 elections rolled around, those voters were nowhere to be found. Hillary Clinton did not receive the Democratic nomination, and on the other side of the coin, the Republican ticket featuring a female vice presidential candidate lost as well. So why is it that we don't vote for women? I believe one of the main factors is that, like it or not, Americans are hard-wired to see women as sex objects. Admittedly, the first time I saw a picture of Helle Thorning-Schmidt, the Premier of Denmark, my first thought was "wow, she's pretty hot." Even when the context deems it completely inappropriate, we objectify women and judge them solely on their looks rather than their worth as candidates. In the 2008 election "Palin's attractiveness resulted in frequent and varied references to her sexiness; whereas, Clinton was viewed as not feminine enough in pantsuits that covered her ankles." Women are caught in this ironic catch 22. If female candidates are deemed too attractive, we no longer take them seriously, as evidenced by the press adopting the moniker "Caribou Barbie" for Sarah Palin. However, if a female candidate is not attractive or feminine enough, we view them as old and matronly, and are turned off to giving them any consideration. We mock Palin for her beauty queen image, and at the same time we lambast Clinton for wearing drab pantsuits. If Clinton began dressing in a more desirable or sexy manner, we would attack her for trying too hard and looking out of place. All the while, what these women look like has absolutely nothing to do with their ability to lead the country.

Another issue facing election-seeking females is that women are viewed as mothers. This point presents a double-edged sword. On the one hand, mothers are recognized as caring nurturers, and thus more likely to identify and empathize with the struggles of the common man. At the same time, mothers are regarded as emotional and weak, and thus unfit to govern or lead. The fact that many of these women are indeed mothers introduces yet another matter of contention. "A career woman who has children-and

who displays them so prominently-often invites questions about whether it is possible to juggle roles." When a female candidate has children to raise, the amount of time she has to focus on political matters comes into question. We simply refuse to picture mommy finger painting with the little ones in the morning, then hosting a summit with the Chinese delegation in the evening.

So who is this superwoman that can rise above the host of obstacles attempting to thwart her ascension? Perhaps it is Hillary Clinton. Award winning White House correspondent Anne Kornblut, sites experience as one of the main hurdles women face in getting elected: "Voters want to know really that women are capable, and sometimes they're more skeptical of female candidates." With over twenty years of public service, as former First Lady, as two-time Senator from New York, and as current Secretary of State, Clinton has an impressive political resume. A recent Gallup poll found that 66% of Americans viewed Clinton favorably, and that same poll found her scoring higher numbers than Joe Biden and President Barack Obama himself. A well liked highly experienced Washington veteran may be just what the doctor ordered when it comes to putting a woman in the White House. Then again, perhaps a fresh-faced new comer would be more palatable in this day and age where so many voters are disgusted with the entrenched political machine. Let us not forget that in comparison to Clinton, Barack Obama was but an inside-the-beltway rookie when he rose to prominence in 2008 with a message of change.

So are Americans ready for a female president? I believe the answer is yes. Outside of Hillary Clinton, there may not be one specific female candidate to put all of our hopes on, but it is obvious that women are becoming more prevalent on the political landscape. Ultimately, it is going to be a numbers game. Kornbult suggests, "I do think it would take a greater variety of women who are able and willing to do this crazy thing, which is run for president—because it does require a degree of insanity to want to do it." As high-profile women holding office becomes more prevalent, and we find females seeking presidential bids more frequently, it will become less of a novelty. As voters are presented with an abundance of female options, it becomes commonplace. These ladies then become viable candidates, and not just a sideshow. It may not happen in the next election, or the one after that, but I believe that in my lifetime, a woman will reside in the White House. Furthermore, I guarantee you that when that day comes, there will be a bevy of journalists referring to it as the Pink House.

I'm not very coordinated. Yes, I'm decent at soccer, but not as good as my ethnic origin might suggest. Running is a perfect fit, though. It's simple; it's like putting one foot in front of the other, but in a much faster fashion. And I've been blessed with a high metabolism and good athletic ability. The only prerequisite needed for the sport is the ability to digest obscene amounts of food, which my body is so efficient at doing that I actually lose weight.

I adopted the sport to fill the hole in my life previously occupied by MAD TV and CSI: Las Vegas. It got my body moving and constantly tested my mental toughness. It's easy to quit in the middle of a seven-mile run, especially when the coach is too slow to keep up. It's easy to slow down for a few extra breaths while doing hill workouts. The thought is inviting and comforting: Stop now, and just think of how good you'll feel. These were everyday temptations that I warded off with the reminder, I'm not here to waste my time.

The hill workouts were paying off. The first mile was almost entirely uphill and I knew when to accelerate so as to completely crush the spirits of those ahead of me as I passed them. Their demoralization fueled my own ambition. Everyone whom I saw ahead was not a discouraging sight—quite the opposite. Each runner represented a personal victory yearning to be achieved; an Everest to be climbed.

My feet slammed against the pavement in a cacophonous gallop. Those ahead heard me before they saw me. I quickened the pace in eager anticipation to match the beat of Nicki Minaj's "Super Bass" as I approached my next victim. He turned his head to measure the distance between us. It was a reassuring gesture. I ran by his side, and we had a quick, mental war. One driven by leg muscles. In this type of war those who back off are the ones who, in that very moment, decide they cannot be asked to give any more, not even by their own person. To my triumph, the runner slowed down and gave me the right of way.

The second mile was mostly flat. It easily succumbed to my persistent barrage, or maybe the exhaustion of others. Whichever it was, I managed to pass a sizeable number of runners, knowing the course well enough to push my pace--hopefully, enough to the point of achieving a personal record. The only thing I wouldn't allow myself to do, then, was slow down.

Finally, the third mile welcomed those who sought to traverse the land with a lovely, steep hill. I had become rather acquainted with hills of this caliber. I knew how to conquer them: by staying on my toes. I went up, and on my way down, I opened up my stride to fully utilize the hill's downward momentum. I stepped on the parking lot and knew that the race was almost over. That's when I heard Andrew yell, "16th!"

I thought I misheard.

Cramps are no fun. But they won't kill you, and that's how I disregard the discomfort. Yes, I inadvertently gave Kelly Clarkson the idea to turn a "What doesn't kill you make you stronger" cliché into a hit. It's a number of things, though, throughout my life that contributed to a level of mental toughness previously untapped - until I started running. Taking care of myself since I was seven because my parents were busy working, my brother's failing grades and his eventual dropping out of college - I realized these things made me want to not just survive, but thrive. To me, school wasn't another bullet point in my Facebook timeline; it was my chance to rise above and get ahead - just one of the many ways to advance while staying completely still, which I accomplished with AP classes, something my brother never even attempted. Taking the time to perform this introspective thought, I wanted to re-instill in my parents the hope they once had when we first came to this country: not to achieve the American dream, but to provide the resources necessary so that their children could do that.

And now I had another chance to get ahead. The finish line was right around the corner. There was one guy just close enough for me to pass, but he wasn't going down without a fight. For more than two miles, we had not seen each other, and now we were in our own personal race. I pressed on. I felt like I was floating across the grass. My legs had gone completely numb.

I passed the finish line and entered Noah's Ark; I finished 15th. The early morning practices, the sweat, the dry vomit, the tears, the shivers, the distance, the strains, the afternoon practices, the ice, the heat, the frustrations, all paid off and materialized in Hermes' sandal, the medal's insignia.

Life has many painful moments, but we all have the capacity to persevere. That's why I keep running.

Anders Larsson
charcoal

Self

Wrenched Spoon

Carina Yun

I.
not a jewel
where you would hold up into the light,
not a spoon offered to a guest
at a Christmas dinner party,
but a freshly dug up geode
–a private spoon made of steel.

II.
The simplest things remind me of you –
stacked white plates, forks,
anniversary cup,
and the rusted cleaver sitting next to
my grandmother's steel pot.

I still hear you bleating,
your voice beating on my ribcage,
as the unforgiving blade spins under the sink.
The hairs on my skin erect.
You've become wrenched.

III.
Monday morning tea,
when I reach into the drawer for a spoon,
I lift you to see your taut skin
serrated. I dip you slowly into honey.
The sweet damp smells drip
from your surface into my cup,
stirring noisily, click-click clanking,
waking up a mockingbird outside my window.

She wakes, singing sweetly a tune:
"Sometimes beginnings aren't so simple;
sometimes goodbye is the only way".

And I could not help but to feel a sting underneath my eyelid.
And melancholy takes over the
click-click-clanking.
IV.
Sunday morning–
the mockingbird sings,

as you slipped underneath the sink,
mounted by eggshells.

you waited–
but the blade spun
crunching on your polished silver body
–you cried like the mouth of baby.

Then the air is filled with silence, like
the moment before opening Schrödinger's cat.

Eyes averted without breath,
I reached my hand beneath the sink,
and thought my fingers would bleed
from your lacerated skin.

V.
Tuesday afternoon, click-click clanking,
tasting honey inside my mouth,
with a new silver spoon.

The mockingbird –mute,
leapt suddenly –
carrying the weight of her body,
while my heavy feet grew pale
–leaving an empty branch outside my window.

I flung it into the sink,
and found you in my drawer.
I hesitated –
staring at your now-saw-toothed shell.

I picked another new spoon
and dipped it into my cup and started click-click clanking,
idly humming,
“Sometimes beginnings aren’t so simple;
sometimes goodbye is the only way”.

A Piece of the Past

Khadija Jenkins

I opened my eyes and the ceiling was all I could see - a vast space of white, as empty as my dreams. I blinked myself into reality and realized that I was in the comfort of my own bed, but the distinct feeling of being out of place did not fade. I knew the house was empty. My mom and step father were on a trip and I had the house to myself. I was content for a moment until I remembered the events that were scheduled for this day. The dread ignited in me faster than a spreading fire. Months ago, I had sold my soul to the devil. I promised my dad I would assist him in the photo shoot he had booked. I figured this would be as good a time as any to reconnect with him - I hadn't been near a camera in years. There was too much history connected with the small memory-capturing contraption. Something had happened. Something bad. I hadn't shared it with anyone. My skin tightened just thinking about it. It's so strange to me - something I used to be so passionate about now sits in a shoebox in the back corner of my closet.

One shot. In one shot you can capture all the beauty or ugliness you want. In one shot you can inspire or insult. The art of photography can imprison any emotion you feel. You can impress others without having to tell anyone how you're really feeling inside.

My camera took me places. It used to be my ticket to shows, concerts, parties, you name it. I could trap a moment of my life and perfect it. Those perfect memories were never entirely my own.

I made my way downtown as the rain fell. It was one of those gloomy days that only seemed to fit the clinically depressed. My umbrella, big and blue, did a pitiful job of keeping me dry. I felt drops of water hitting my legs, and the cool morning air sent shivers down my arms. My dad had warned me it would be chillier today, but of course, I ignored him. He told me, the daughter he was too drunk to boss around when she was younger, to meet him promptly at 9 o'clock. As I got closer to the studio, something began to settle in the pit of me. The feeling of fear and dread that I had tried to bury away for years now crept up on me. I had been a fool to think this day could go by without a problem. How could I have promised to spend time with the father that was never there for me when I needed him? How could I have thought that this reconnection wouldn't bring up the past? My new shoes splash in and out of puddles. The bottom of my white dress was wet and my curls were bigger now than when I left the house, but the blowing wind seemed to match the wind that was blowing inside my mind. When I reached the building, I had an urge to vomit. This is the last thing I need to be doing. I shouldn't be anywhere near a camera, or my father, for that matter. I continued into the studio, but when I came off the elevator, I could hear my dad's voice from a room down the hall, and I knew. I knew I had to turn around and go home.

There was a time when my dad, my camera, and I couldn't be separated. Whenever my dad was feeling creative, he would visit me and teach me all he knew about photography. I cherished those moments and grew up waiting for him to put the bottle down and pay more attention to me. After the divorce, I barely ever spent time with him. When I did, I made sure I got the most out of it. Then it happened three years ago and made me put my camera down and stop waiting for my dad to choose me over the booze.

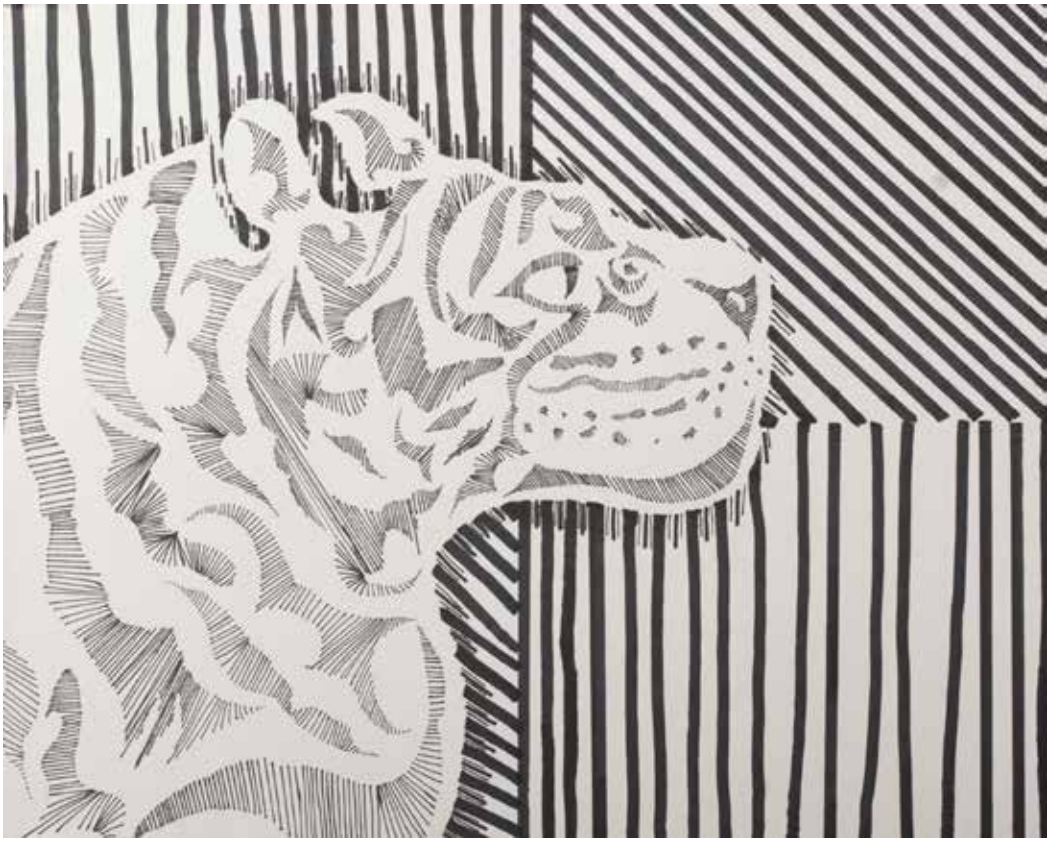
My legs carried me around town faster than a developing Polaroid picture being

shaken to life. Thoughts were moving through my mind quite quickly and without a filter. I wandered for hours just moving and thinking. I needed to get home and calm down. My phone had rung several times before I pulled it out of my pocket. I already knew it was my father. I turned it on vibrate to get some peace. It was getting darker, and I was sure he was confused and angry with me. But it's me who should have been angry at him for everything that happened. I walked around the growing puddles and had to keep switching arms to hold my umbrella. When I got home, the house was still empty and the phone base had a red flashing light. I ignored it and went to my room. My phone vibrated without end. In a swift motion, I took it out of my pocket and flung it under the bed. My dad didn't deserve an explanation; after all, he never gave me one.

I felt an overwhelming urge to dig the camera out of my closet. I crept over to the doors and slowly opened them. To unsuspecting eyes, the closet was as perfectly normal as any girls'. Unfortunately, mine held a secret. A secret that made me hideaway my passion and disconnect from my dad even more. I pushed passed shoeboxes and fallen purses and uncovered the box that concealed the one set of negatives that I would never develop. I removed the lid, and the camera lens stared up at me with a wide gawk, like the one on my face. The camera seemed to be mocking me, sitting there in the box like an innocent present that didn't have the ability to ruin my life. I grabbed a bag, a jacket, and the camera. I had built up so much hatred for the camera that I couldn't stand it any longer. In a flash, I thought of an idea. I knew exactly what to do. Before leaving the house, I paid a visit to the garage and borrowed one of my step father's shovels.

After walking for a while with the bag weighing down my shoulder, I discovered a nice resting place for my black cloud. It was in the woods, far away from my house. Night had fallen, and so had my dignity. If anyone had looked through the night and seen me digging in the dirt, they wouldn't have believed it was me - the girl that would rather stay inside where it's clean was now anxiously shoveling dirt as fast as she could. I was closer to the outdoors than I ever wanted to be, but I had a good reason for it. I frantically dug deep into the wet soil, slipping and breaking my freshly manicured nails. Nothing could deter me from finally doing away with a forever- looming piece of the past. When I felt as though I had dug deep enough, I wrapped the camera in the jacket and threw it down into the seemingly bottomless pit. With a crash came a sense of relief, and I started to shovel and kick dirt into the burial hole. I took off running, covered with dirt and mud, until I reached my house.

The heaviness of the day pulled me down as I sank into my bed. There was a little light coming through my window, but my lush curtains concealed most of it. It was morning already, and my mom and step father would be home in the evening. I slid off my shoes covered with dirt. The mud from the soles was now on my hands. Everything was on my hands and on my conscience. I wiped my hands on my dress where the mud joined the dirt that had already settled there. A wave of heat moved through my body. My muscles were sore and all I could do was try to sleep and hopefully forget about the day I had just had. I could hear my phone vibrating from under my bed - a faint hum, aided by the metal of my bed frame. It was soothing in a sort of someone's- looking-for-me, someone-cares-about- me sort of way. I tried to forget about my dad, the mess of mud I had just tracked through the house, and about what happened years ago. I just laid there focusing on the sound of my phone.

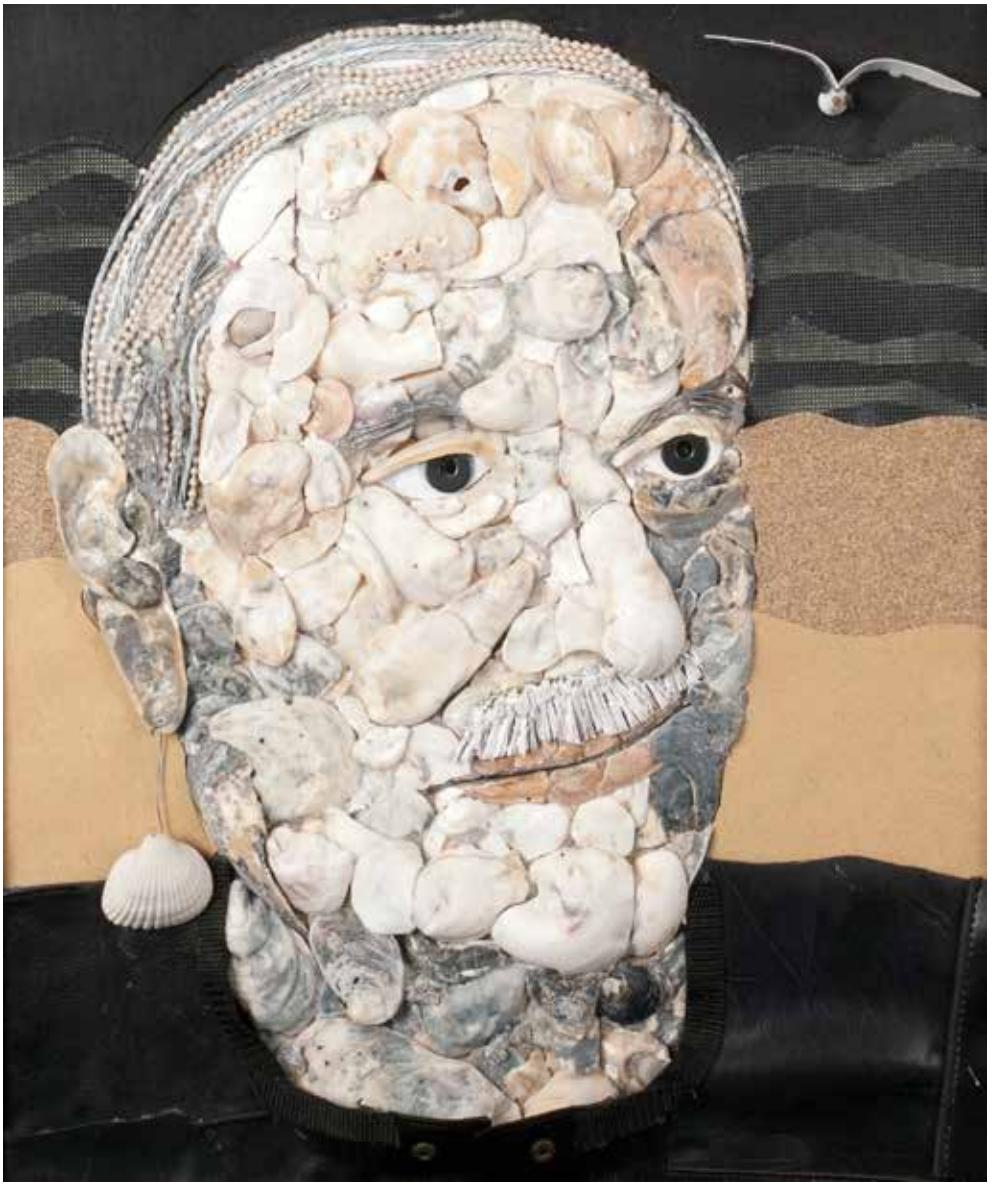


Bethany Taguding
sharpie on paper

Tigre

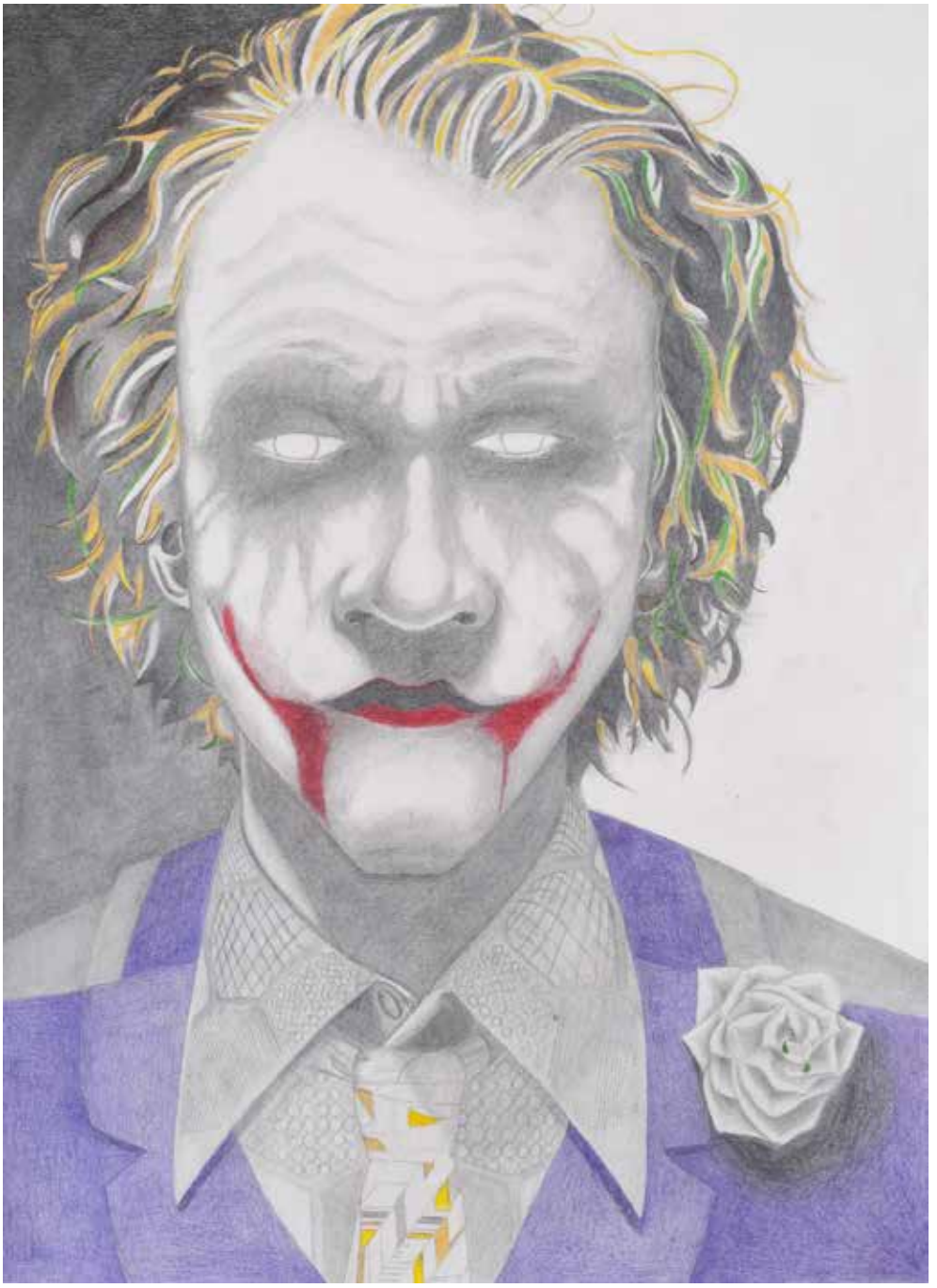
Kyle Davis
foamboard, paper

Megalith



Philip Hodges
mixed media

Barnacle Phil



Ezer Bermudez
pencil

The Joker

Michelle Crutchfield
colored pencil

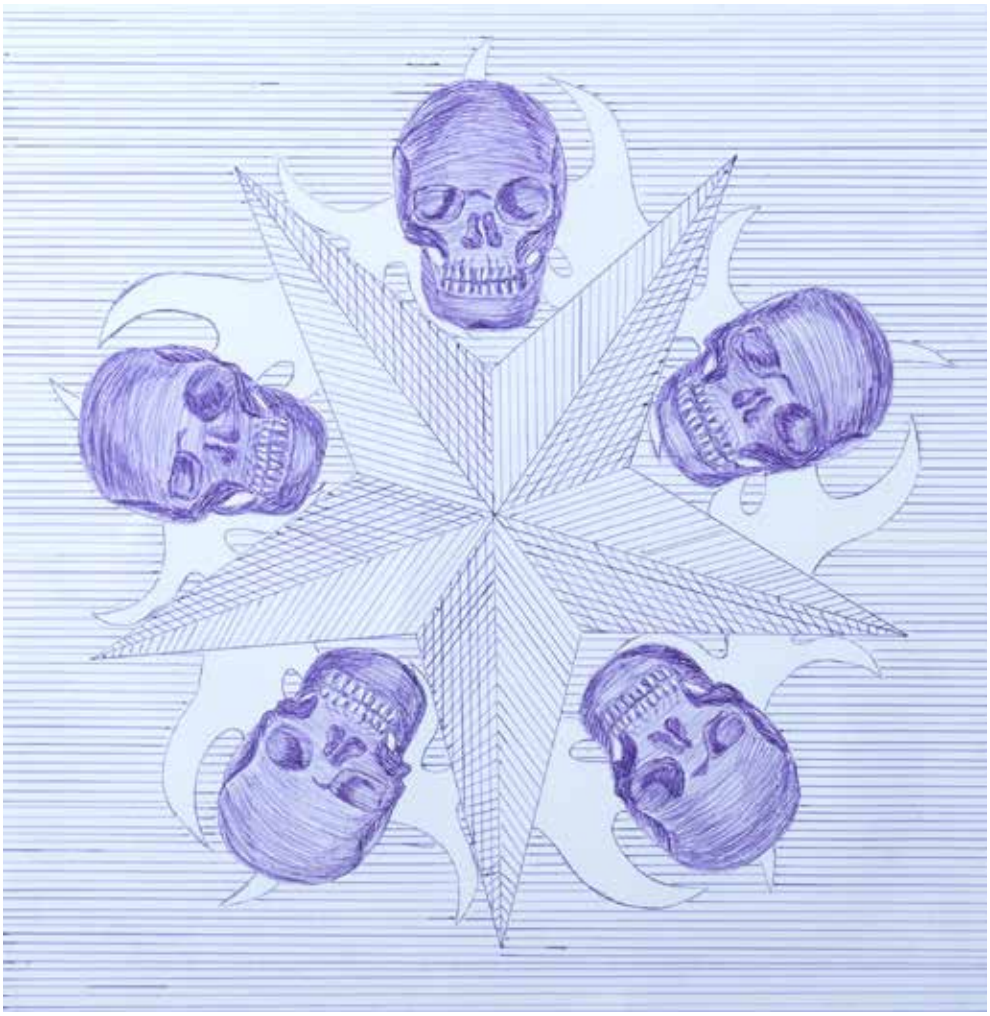
New Bedroom

Sarah Ummen
clay

Bile

Frank Spink
clay

Butterscotch Bowl



Jack Quigley
pen and ink

Skulls

Calliope First Prize 2013

Kelly Henrickson

oil on canvas

Double Skull Still Life

Bottle Caps

Vy Phan

Sometimes, I feel that living is like being bottled up. A bottle is able to float on the water because of the cap meant to keep the air inside. The air can symbolize the hope that people have in their lives. No one can live without hope like the bottle cannot float without the air inside it. The destination of the floating bottle will always be a mystery. People never know where the water and the wind will take the bottle or what will happen in their own lives. Since each and every life is a great narrative, I keep wondering what will happen to the bottle if a storm comes and knocks away the cap.

I started a new morning with a big bowl of cereal, and my dad was sitting on the couch, watching the weather forecast. My mom and my eight-year-old little sister, Jenny, were still upstairs, preparing for school. Jenny is a very cute little girl; however, she is a total sleepy head. I had a hard time waking her up every morning when we still shared a room. No matter how many times I shook and tickled her, not to mention kicked her out of the bed, she still managed to maintain her dream land. My mom was the only one who could wake her up, and up until now, I haven't been able to tell how Mom did that. After finishing my breakfast, I saw Mom and Jenny emerge from the stairs.

"It's going to rain today," said my dad.

Looking out to the enormous blue sky outside, I asked, "Is it, Dad? The weather is so nice."

"It's always like that. It clenches silently, and until you realize it, you are already soaked wet," my mom said, as she was helping Jenny with her breakfast.

After getting ready, we climbed in Dad's car and headed to school. Mom and Dad dropped me off first since my school was closer. I stood at the school's gate and looked up to the clear sky. Is it really going to rain with this beautiful sky? I wondered before turning around and walking to class.

Every day after classes were over, I usually wait for Dad at the front gate, but today I stood under the school's porch. The rain was falling heavily outside and the lightning was roaring in the sky. The sky was still beautiful a few minutes ago. After a while, I was quite surprised to see Mom's car coming toward my direction. Maybe Dad stays late at work, I said to myself and didn't bother thinking further. Later that evening, a phone call came when Mom, Jenny, and I were having dinner together. Mom went to pick the call, but after she finished talking, Mom returned with an unhappy face. I guessed that Dad was drinking with his friends and would be home late again that day.

Business drinking is an unwritten rule that has existed for a long time. It seems that not every meeting will occur in big conference rooms with chairs and a wide table. Some deals can be made at a bar or during a dinner. Business drinking provides more opportunities for people to socialize in the community. Many people agree that drinking is a double-edged knife. This knife either helps people succeed in their career or turns back to strike its owner. However, business drinking is never the same as normal drinking. Depending on whom people do business with: bosses, co-workers, or clients, there are many different rules about business drinking. Talking with clients with a glass of rum or coke in your hand will leave a negative impression. Moreover, no one wants to get drunk in the middle of a deal. Business drinking is a powerful weapon, but people need to know how to use it properly. When walking on the business road, drinking will

automatically become a daily habit, a part of life.

Mom said that business came along with drinking, so she wouldn't mind the fact that Dad came home late when he went out and drank with his colleagues. However, it had become annoying to Mom since Dad kept going out more and more often, and there were some nights that Dad didn't come home at all. He said he was too drunk to drive, so he stayed at his friend's house.

I helped Mom clean up the table and the dishes, and then I went to my room to do homework. After I finished preparing for the next day's class, I turned around and found Jenny already sleeping. I looked out the window, to the garage. Mom's car was the only one there. It passed midnight and there was no sign of Dad. I turned off the light and got into bed. The rain was falling persistently outside. I pulled the blanket up to my chin and wondered until falling asleep, does life also change as abruptly as the weather?

The next morning, Jenny kept asking about Dad's presence. She bothered me all day for only one question, "Where is Dad?" And the only answer I gave her was that Dad would be home soon. Of course, Dad would be home soon because he had never gone out for more than a day. That was what I thought to myself. However, Dad didn't come home that night, either. He turned off his phone. Mom and I had been taking turns to call him, maybe a hundred times. The only thing we could get was his voice from the voicemail box. Mom told us to go to sleep since we all had school the next day. Even though I wanted to stay with Mom, I listened to her and went to our room with Jenny. I knew that Jenny wouldn't go to sleep alone while Mom and I stayed up to wait for Dad. I took Jenny to our room. We brushed our teeth and then got in the bed to sleep.

Around midnight, I came downstairs to fetch a glass of water. The light in the living room was still on, and Mom asleep on the couch. Mom's back would ache if she slept there for the night. I gently patted her shoulder. Mom turned off the light before both of us headed to my room upstairs. Jenny was still sleeping soundly. Mom stuffed me in my bed before bidding a goodnight and returning to her room. I couldn't sleep that night, but kept staring at the ceiling, asking myself a question to which I knew I couldn't get the answer, Where are you, Dad?

Jenny and I were sitting in our grandparents' room. Dad had been missing for two days, so we decided to go to our grandparents' house to look for him. We saw him sitting at the dining table. I felt so frustrated. He didn't show any surprise. I remembered that Mom fell asleep on the couch waiting for him. I called him a hundred times and he didn't pick up. Jenny kept asking for him all day long. I wanted to ask him how he could sit there and read a newspaper instead of going home with us. Our grandma told Jenny and me to go to their room and wait for the adults to have a talk. We turned on the TV and watched it together. Even though my eyes were glued to the TV, my mind was wandering somewhere else. I couldn't help but feel curious.

An hour passed. Mom called for us to go home. Dad was sitting at the driver's seat when we got to the car. On our way home, we joked around in the car, but Mom and Dad only responded in nonchalant tones. Something was not right and I felt it. How could everything be solved so easily? My flow of thinking was interrupted by Jenny's voice. "Yay! Daddy is coming home." She was squealing in delight. Jenny had no worries at all, and at that time, I wished I could be like her.

I was right. A thunderstorm would never end without lightning. That night, I instantly ran downstairs when I heard noise from an argument. When I reached to the

living room, Dad and Mom were fighting. At first, it was a verbal fight.

"How can you do that to us?" Mom shouted

"I have my own life. I can do whatever I want, Doris."

"What about Jenny and Vivian? They are your daughters. Is she more important than the family you have?"

Mom grabbed Dad's shirt. Mom was on verge of tears.

What is Mom talking about? Who is "she"? I felt so confused. Those questions spun in my head like a swinging top. Dad shoved Mom away, which made her fall back.

He yelled out, "It's none of your business."

I immediately ran to Mom and helped her get up. I looked straight into Dad's eyes. "Dad! What are you doing?" Then I saw Jenny standing on the stairs. She seemed to be shocked by what she saw. Dad had never yelled at Mom or us before.

Mom said to me, "Vivian. Take Jenny upstairs. Listen to Mommy."

I argued, "I don't want to."

And Dad shouted at me, "Listen to her and go now." I stared at Dad and decided to listen to them. Jenny was too young. I couldn't let her see our parents fighting.

When we were already in our room, Jenny asked with a worried voice, "Why do Mom and Dad fight? What is going on?" I couldn't answer Jenny because I also asked myself those questions. Dad hadn't simply gone out with friends for drinking. Being too drunk and staying at his friend's house was an excuse, a lie all the time. He had been staying with another woman. I hadn't noticed any of that before. I had never felt worried about the fact that Dad going out could make things turn bad. Right then, I heard someone upstairs and the sound of an opening door. I opened the door and saw Dad, in his room, and packing his clothes.

When I got in our parents' room, I asked, "Dad, what are you doing?"

Dad ignored me and continued to toss his clothes into a suitcase. Frightened and about to cry, I held his arm and said with a broken voice, "Dad. Where are you going? Are you leaving?" Despite how hard I tried to stop him, Dad still ignored me.

After he was done packing, he looked at me and said, "Take care of Mom and Jenny." His voice was nonchalant, cold, and empty.

Earlier, everything had been like a slow-motion film playing in my head. My mind was crowded with fear and questions. Will Dad really leave? What about our family, Mom, Jenny, and me? Who will take care of us? Those questions kept spinning and fear was consuming inside me. And then I heard him tell me to take care of the family with his cold, empty voice; he seemed not to care much about his own family. My emotion switched like a light switch. Fear was replaced with anger. I shouted out, "Dad. It's your responsibility to take care of Mom, Jenny and me."

And so, that was the last thing I said to Dad. That day was the day that Dad turned his back on us, walked away, and never came back. I finally found the answer by myself. What will happen to the bottle if the bottle loses its cap and water starts to pour in? The bottle will drown.

A few days later, Mom and Jenny cried their hearts out, but I didn't shed a tear at all. It hurt to see my mom and my little sister that way. The year I was fourteen was the darkest moment in my life. My life was twisted from a perfect fairytale to a tragedy. It was sudden and abrupt, like the rain. A month later, our family met again not at home, but at the court. Mom and Dad decided to divorce, and we had to face a problem that Jenny and I might have to live with my dad. I could still remember clearly the day when Mom won the right to raise both of us; she cried so hard in happiness and joyfulness. She kept whispering to us a sentence. That sentence has changed my way of thinking.

A sentence has made me stay stronger for Mom, for Jenny and for myself. It's a sentence that I wish Dad had said. On that day, while hugging her two daughters tightly, the woman kept on whispering that she would never let them go because they were the only miracle that she'd ever had in her life.

Like I've said, life is like being in a capped bottle. The air is our hope and it keeps us surviving throughout storms. What if the storm knocks away the cap and water starts to pour in? After everything that has happened to me, I can answer that question without hesitating. Even if there is still a little air remaining inside, I just have to bottle up myself and continue my journey, my life as a bottle floating on the enormous sea.

Addiction

Melina Smith

Addiction
When everything is said and done,
And no one's left to deceive,
And the smoke finally starts to clear,
How will you perceive?

When you look into the mirror,
Who exactly do you see?
A shadow of a person,
Someone you'll never be?

You really had me fooled,
I thought you truly cared,
But now I understand,
You faked all the times we shared.

Everyone has problems,
Life is no fairy tale,
But you just can't forgive your past,
You can't look past the veil.

I know I was no perfect friend,
But I tried to meet your needs,
But in the end instead of me,
Your best friend was your weed.

Life's Irony

Sandra Santana

1980

"You have a girl! She is beautiful."
"I don't want to see her."
Those were the first words that I heard when I was born. At least, that was what my grandma told me.

My biological father was a very rich military man, and he saw me only once at the hospital. He left a check for my mother and begged her to vanish from his life, since he was married and had two children already.

My biological mother was only 18 years old, already the mother of a 16-month-old boy. She didn't want me because she claimed that my father had abused her when she was a maid at his house. She decided to give me to her mother, who lived thousands of miles away from her.

1992

"Grandma, I want to go with my mother."
"Let me save some money, and I will send you to her."
Twelve years passed in order for me to see the woman who had been seen only in pictures, and for the first time, she tried to be nice to me. She talked proudly about me to her friends, but there wasn't any real feeling for me. After six months of living with her, nothing had changed, so I went back with my grandma.

1999

"How long are you planning to stay?"
"Two weeks."
"Welcome to the U.S.A."

2013

"Congratulations! You are now officially a U.S citizen."

My mother left me, and I left my grandma. That is not what life should be, but there are circumstances in life that must be understood. For example, if my mother had raised me, I wouldn't be here in the U.S.A., and if I had not left my grandma, I wouldn't be here, either. Now, I want to bring my mother to live with me, but I can't. By U.S. immigration laws, my grandma is not considered my mother.

Charity Case

Robert C.Trexler

"Wait'll I get you," I yelled at Joe, who had just hit me.

He had hopped onto the row of covered garbage cans that stood next to a fence, and then vaulted over it into the yard next door. I wanted revenge.

We were nine years old that summer; fleet of foot and immortal.

As I leaped from the top of the fence, the lace on my right sneaker caught on a barb, tripping me. I put out my arms to break my fall from the five foot high wooden fence that had been topped by a string of barbed wire to keep boys from climbing it. The only thing that broke was my arm. Joe got away because I was in such intense pain; I could think of nothing except going home to my mother.

"You know you're not to climb that fence," she scolded, absolving herself from blame. Her examination of the injury did nothing to reduce the pain, and her words meant that it was my fault for violating her injunction.

There was nothing to do about it except to wait for my father's return from work when he would take a look. While I waited, the tears that had dampened my shirt ebbed, but the pain remained.

"We'll see what it looks like tomorrow," my father said. (He was not a man to act hastily.) It meant I would have at least another twenty-four hours before competent medical attention would be sought. I wished for a miracle that would transport me back in time twenty-four hours to when I was undamaged.

I slept fitfully, careful not to roll onto the sore elbow. In the morning, the elbow was swollen and the skin inflamed and warmer than the rest of me. I could not use the arm at all, although the pain had subsided some. I spent the day in front of the radio. It would have been pointless to try to play with my friends.

When he returned from work, my father took another look at my arm and concluded that it would not cure itself. He fixed a sling for me so that I could walk less painfully from our house to the hospital, which was about a half mile away. It was not an easy trip for him because of his limp, the result of a polio attack years before, and worse for me when every step brought a surge of pain.

At the hospital, they put us in a room where I sat on a table, and my father, recovering from the walk and his day's work, sat in a chair and looked unhappy. The economic depression of the thirties had reduced his work week to three days. His current income barely paid our bills. His first wife had died, along with her baby. A son of his first marriage and he had contracted but recovered from polio. Now this!

When the medical staff arrived, they examined me and decided that they would keep me to fix what they agreed was a broken bone.

I undressed and gave my clothes to my father. I wore a cotton gown. They rolled me away on the examining table to a ward on the fourth floor of the building. There, they transferred me to a bed in a room with twenty other boys of various ages. This ward was bounded by shade-less windows that let in much sunlight, and for those who could walk, let us gaze on the rooftops of the old city.

Soon, a woman, perhaps a nurse, took me to a bathroom. I certainly needed a bath, but I was emotionally unprepared for this strange woman to see my naked body. She helped me wash because my healthy left arm was not enough to do the job.

Afterwards, she dressed me in fresh pajamas and delivered me back to a bed. There, she tied my broken arm to a bedpost so that I could not roll on it. I had never been away from my parents, or slept in any bed but my own. I was alone among strangers now, and heard their whimpers in the darkness of the ward where the ceiling held reflected street lights.

In the early hours of the next day, they took me to a surgery. A team of doctors examined x-rays, poked and twisted my arm…all accompanied by my screeching. Ultimately, they decided that since the bones had not broken the skin, and since the injury was just a day old, there was no need to "re-break" the arm to put the bones into their proper position. They jabbed me with a pain killer so that they could move the bones without having to listen to my screams. When they were satisfied that the bones were in the proper relationship to each other, they wrapped my arm with a 2 inch wide gauze bandage that was saturated with wet Plaster of Paris. My arm was covered from mid hand to three inches above my elbow with an eighth inch thick bandage that would harden into a cast. My fingers were exposed, but practically useless. They fitted me with a sling and sent me back to bed, tying the arm to the bedpost again.

In the morning, the cast was hard, and they freed me from the bedpost.

Thus began nine days, during which I became almost the longest-held patient in the ward. There were a couple of other boys whose injuries had to do with spines, or legs. These guys were bed-ridden, some with a leg supported by ropes from an overhead framework. They were still there when I left.

Several times, attendants put half dozen boys on a table and roll them to the surgery. They were there for tonsillectomies. After surgery, the patients were placed in a separate room to recover. When they were able, they ate ice cream. I envied their access to ice cream.

Once, a boy lay in the bed next to mine, recovering from an appendectomy. His breath expelled the ether that had been used to anesthetize him. The odor was unpleasant.

Anywhere from ten to fifteen of us were able to move around the ward on our own. At least once a day, a nurse would take our temperatures. The thermometers were thin glass tubes that contained mercury. She inserted them into our anuses and let us wander about the ward until she recalled us to take the readings. Those of us who were "old-timers" graduated to inserting and withdrawing the thermometers ourselves. There was something strangely amusing to see half a dozen barefoot boys walking around with thermometers sticking out of their bums.

My mother visited me every afternoon, usually bringing me an ice cream cone that I could eat with my left hand. She sat by my bed and ate her ice cream from a half-pint box. Ice cream was a favorite treat for my mother and me.

Before they discharged me, the fall school term had begun. The hospital had set up a school room adjacent to the ward. I had to attend it.

After my discharge, I wore the cast for a week. Then, it was back to the hospital for it to be removed. To take the cast off required a technician to saw along the length of it. I feared that the saw blade would penetrate and cut my skin, but it did not. After he had made the cut, he took a kind of pliers and pried the two halves apart. I was happy to have it off so I could scratch away the itchy, dead skin.

My next task was to exercise the arm so that it would become straight again. This had some pain associated with it. If I did not succeed on my own, they threatened to tie a weight to it, forcing the arm to straighten. I succeeded.

The doctors who cared for me did an excellent job. I never had any after effects or disfigurements from the injury. I have no idea why the hospital kept me in the ward for

nine days. My medical condition certainly did not require it.

A few weeks later, a bill collector arrived at my home to extract money from us for the hospitalization. Like many other families in those depression years, we had no money for him, and we never heard any more about it. I guess the hospital crossed us off its accounts as a charity case.

Independent

Amanda Crane

A doctor won't understand
You are tied down they say
You are broken they mumble
You need fixing they express

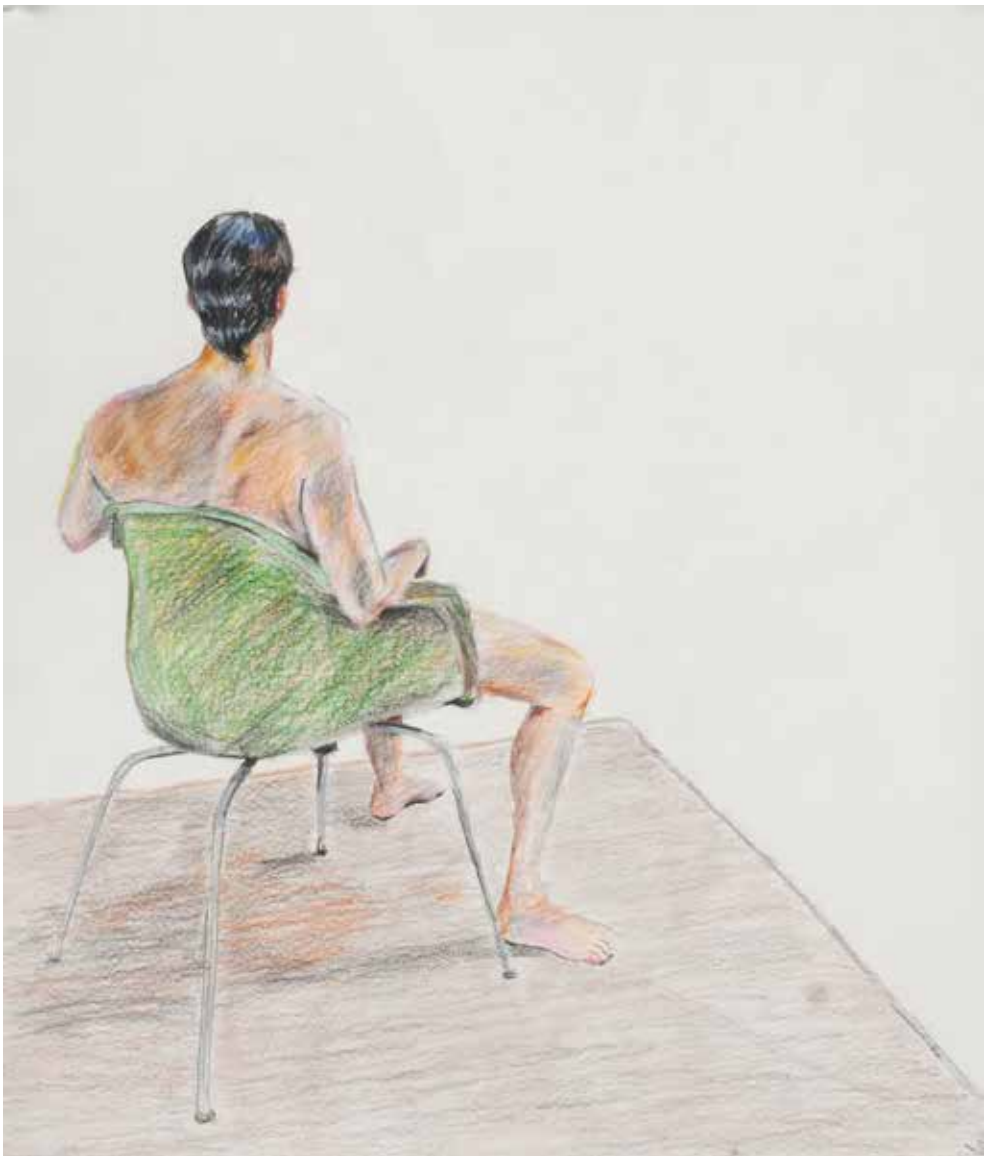
A hearing person wouldn't understand
You are free they say
You are independent they mumble
You are innocent they express

A teacher might understand
I am here for you they say
I support you they mumble
I am aware of your situation they express

An interpreter could understand
I relate with you they say
I get what you mean they mumble
I understand you they express

I am deaf I say
I am no broken I mumble
I don't need help I express

No one will fully understand
Music is what I crave
Independence would be grand
My life is normal I rave
It's not my fault I demand
Alone in this life I must be brave
Change me Hell if I'll be damned
I am who I am



Anders Larsson
colored pencil

Untitled

Kiara Fernandez
watercolor

Untitled

Dan Ah Kim
acrylic

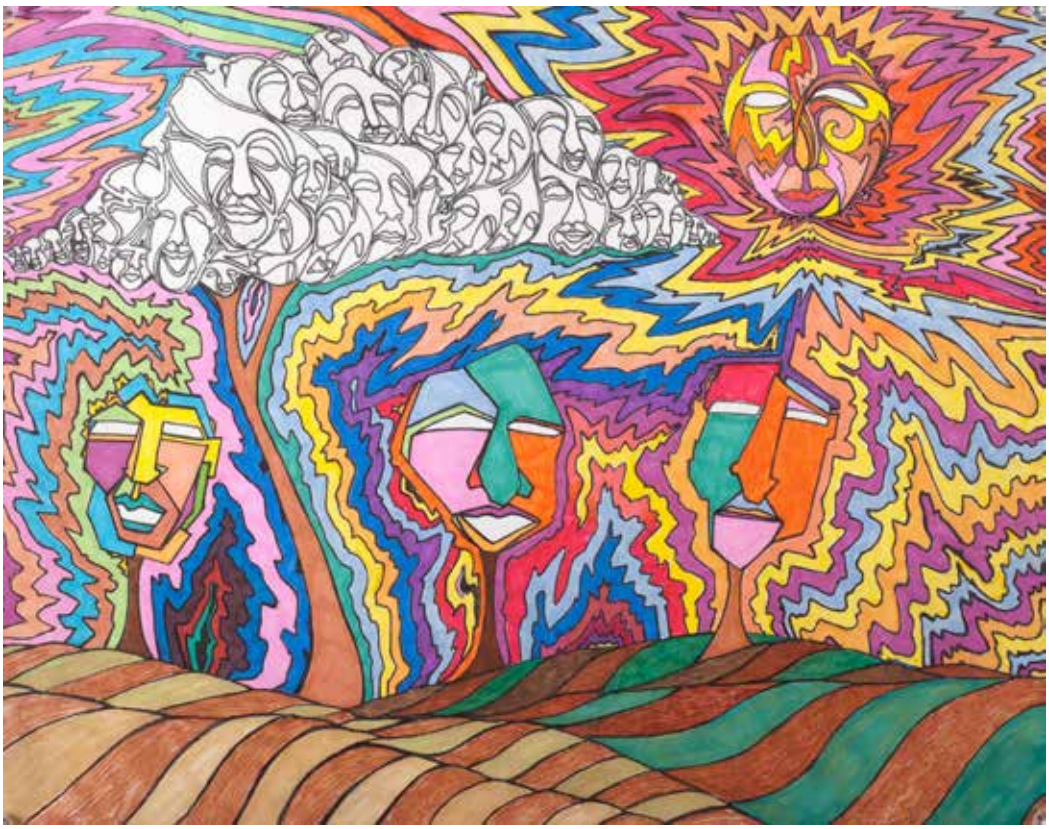
Hardship In Love

Robbie Papetti
clay

Stegosaur

Tracey Lee
oil on canvas

Sable (Artist's Dog)



Trevor Capps
marker on bristol

Natural Expression

Andy Berger
clay

Stumped

Gawon Lee
acrylic

Portrait

A Broken Man

Amanda Ganzermiller

You can tell a broken man by the way he stands; no matter how perfectly postured he tries to make himself appear, his chin is always tilted slightly downward. His sallow cheeks add years to his face, and he keeps his hands in his pockets because he doesn't want you to see them shaking. Every time your gaze meets that of a broken man, he seems to be asking a question. Why me? Why us? Why now? He will silently but desperately be pleading for you to do something that he knows you cannot do. All he wants is to make the pain go away, to go back and change his mistake. More likely than not, the first time-machine will be invented by a broken man.

The most important feature of a broken man is his eyes. He always seems to be staring at something you cannot see. His eyes are empty of anything but sadness and regret. They are a blank map to a lost soul. He has no words with which to tell you how he feels, but a broken man's eyes say it all. He's sorry. For everything.

A broken man's smiles are cracked, just like the pieces of his shattered heart.

It was hard to say why things like this happened; they just did. The reason I was standing in a cemetery on an icy day in November, waiting for a one year old to be plunged six feet under, completely eluded me. The facts, of course, were clear (I'd come with my wife; she was friends with the boy's mother), but somehow I felt there was a deeper meaning that I wasn't quite grasping. An hour before, at the wake, I'd barely been able to keep myself composed. When I first walked up to the open casket, what I found completely surprised me. Dead people weren't supposed to look like angels. Then again, this wasn't just a dead person, but a child. A baby. I hadn't known him, and suddenly I wished I had. It's not that I was a kid person, because I wasn't. My wife and I had decided a long time ago not to have them. But now, when faced with such a tragedy, I couldn't help but wonder what it would be like to wake up every morning to find something so precious, and know that you had helped create it. There was just something about someone so purely innocent that was appealing - a source of truth in a world that had gone so terribly wrong. Then again, what would it be like to have something like that taken away? To be so completely violated, to be robbed of the reason you woke up in the morning. I realized what the boy's parents must have been going through, and guilt washed over me like a wave - one that comes out of nowhere, and leaves you breathless. Why was it that the innocent always made up for the sins of the guilty? Absolutely disgusting - was what it was.

Another glance at his cherubic face, and I was running down the hall in search of a bathroom. Seconds later, I'd puked up all of the disgust, which was quickly replaced with mournful sorrow.

At the burial, I found myself distracted as the pastor delivered his final words to the boy. The last of the leaves were still clinging to the trees, but the wind seemed determined to pull them away and send them flying into forever. The ground was wet, but it wasn't raining. The soft crying of mourners echoed throughout, and I set my gaze on them. One woman, probably in her late sixties, and whom I took to be the boy's grandmother, was standing close to the casket, letting the tears flow freely from her swollen eyes. The whole time, I never once saw her lift a finger to wipe a tear away. Her misery was unveiled.

As the casket was lowered into the ground, I saw my first truly broken heart. A petite blonde woman burst out in uncontrollable sobs. Her legs caved out from under her and she fell to her knees and screamed for her baby. It wasn't fair, and she couldn't stand it. She reached for the casket and held on for dear life. She bargained, promised to trade her own life for his. Others around shook their heads in pity. I don't know how she bore the pain, but I'm sure she would have had them bury her with him, if they'd let her.

Finally, the old woman gently pulled the mother away. Slowly, everybody else began to drift away too. It was over.

Only it wasn't.

I told my wife to go home, that I'd catch a cab. For a few moments I just stared at the newly covered hole in the ground, wondering how many other holes it had created. Tears that I hadn't wanted the others to see welled in my eyes. I wandered over to the base of a willow tree and sank to the ground, my head between my knees. It had started to drizzle lightly, but I continued to sit. A few moments later, a voice made me jump.

"God's crying for him." he said.

The man was tall and wiry. The dark circles under his eyes indicated that he hadn't slept in days. It looked like it hurt him just to stand. He was staring up at the sky, his tears blending with the rain.

"For who?" I asked, already knowing the answer.

"My son," he said. "He's crying for my son."

"I'm so sorry. I can only imagine what you're going through."

Suddenly, the man was angry. He glared at me accusingly.

"Why do people always say that? It's like you're asking me to comfort you and say it's okay. It will never be okay." The tears poured even harder down his wind-chapped cheeks.

"You're right." I said, "I didn't mean to offend you. I just… I don't know. I should probably go." I started to walk away.

"Wait, don't go! " he pleaded.

"Why?" I turned back to face him.

"Because when I'm alone, I remember the crash. I remember all the pain I caused, and how much my wife hates me, even if she doesn't come right out and say it."

Pain, I had noticed through this terrible mess of a day, came in so many different forms, but there seemed to be one common denominator. It destroyed all within its path, left no soul that it touched unbroken. I also knew that the man in front of me had suffered some of the worst pain imaginable. Not only because his son was dead, but because it was his fault.

He went on to tell me a story I sometimes wish I had never heard.

His son's name had been Ridley. He and his wife had tried for years to have a baby, so Ridley was an extraordinary gift to them. Ridley was only five pounds at birth, but healthy and strong. His eyes were blue, but not just any blue. They were like the blue of the sky on a clear day, when you almost think it's possible to see the gates of heaven if you looked close enough. But to Ridley's parents, it didn't matter if they could see heaven. They'd already found it in Ridley.

Ridley's smile could melt the bitterest of hearts. He had his own special quirks that made him all the more loveable. The face he put on when he was in the backyard, having just discovered something new; the way he never cried when he fell down, but simply brushed himself off and continued on his way. When he was playing in the living room, he sometimes walk over to his father and just rest his head on his lap. He blew his mother kisses on her way out the door to work. His cute baby babbles turned into words like Mama and Daddy, and his parents were amazed. All of these things took Ridley's

parent's breath away, and made them wonder how they could ever be so lucky.

The night Ridley died, he'd been unusually cranky. He missed his mother, who was away on business. His father had tried everything before he finally strapped Ridley into his car seat. A nice quiet drive sometimes calmed him down. Ridley's father set off on the road, never knowing it would be a night he'd relive the rest of his life.

He told me that the sound most clear in his mind was the screeching of the tires as he was jerked awake and swerved his car off the road. Glass shattered all around him, and for a moment, time stopped. He could feel himself drifting away, his blood loss growing greater by the second. But something pulled him back to reality, told him that it wasn't his time to go.

As quickly as it had stopped, time started again. In a flash the air bag deployed, and he desperately struggled to unhook his seatbelt. He turned to find Ridley in the backseat, making no sound at all. The sight of the blood rapidly making its way down Ridley's face was almost too much to bear. He climbed his way to the back, and wrenched his jacket from his shoulders. He tied it around his son's head, and began to apply pressure. He pressed himself closer to Ridley, as if he could breathe his own life into him. He kept up the pressure for a few minutes, but the inevitable had come. He cried out in anguish, willing his son not to go, all along knowing it was no use. Ridley was gone.

As his baby boy slipped away, all he could ask was that heaven's newest angel made it there safely.

When the man finished with his story, I couldn't bring myself to speak. I just stared at him and wondered what he had done to deserve such a punishment. And as he started to walk away, I realized that I hadn't gotten his name. But it didn't matter because I already knew whom he was.

A broken man.

Busch Gardens Bug

Elise G. Rossi

Curtis was a katydid,
Very green and small.
He was also very curious,
The bravest of them all.

He loved to jump and crawl,
And wander far from home.
But one day while exploring,
They found him quite alone.

Two girls found him on the ground,
Pretending to be cement,
They tried to catch him in their hands, but
Up he jumped and off he went.

They tried to put him in the grass,
Back where he belonged,
But Curtis didn't know that,
And didn't go along.

When at last he was out of reach,
The girls stayed the chase.
Curtis made one final leap,
Landing in a horrible place.

He landed on the Mäch Tower,
A drop tower of renown.
And no sooner had he landed there,
It began to leave the ground.

Up and up, and higher still,
The ground so far below.
And Curtis didn't know what to think,
But only thought "Uh oh!"

Being just a katydid,
Curtis could not see well.
Everything looked vast and blue.
The ride slowed and stopped, then fell.

If katydids could scream,
Who would not hear him?
The two girls stood watching from below,
Wondering if he'd come down again.

In curiosity, they watched
The ride come to its base,
They watched with wide eyes as it stopped,
Curtis perched in the same place.

Behind

Edcel Concepcion

Behind the shining sun
A poor man
Behind the smiles
A weeping cry
Behind the new car
A soaring loan
Behind the big house
A lonely widow
Behind the stars
A dark past
Behind the beautiful eyes
A frozen heart
Behind the blue sky
A rainy day
Behind the good job
A restless life
Behind the delicious food
An anorexic woman
Behind a good government
A homeless child
Behind the good Earth
Is suffering.

Starting Late, Yet Right On Time

Evan McLeese

Pursuing a higher education is one of the most rewarding and worthwhile endeavors one can undertake. From intellectual empowerment and a sense of accomplishment to a wider array of career opportunities and a higher lifetime earning potential, there exists a myriad of great reasons to attend college.

These are a few of the points that will inevitably arise when one is debating whether or not to go to school. But people only ever seem to question whether they should go to school—not when they should go to school. It is my assertion that attending college later in life, as opposed to directly after high school, offers many advantages and ultimately proves to be the superior choice. While on the surface it may seem counter-intuitive to wait to finish your schooling and launch your career, there are advantages of such a strategy.

Many of the issues people would mark as cons when making this important decision are simply resolved with time. You may hear a recent high school graduate remark, "College is just so expensive." It sure is, so make sure you are ready to get the most for the money spent. Another may gripe, "School is so boring; I'd literally rather be doing anything else." Well, as you get older, you just might find that you actually enjoy learning. Finally, you will always find those who declare, "Why waste my time with school when I can just start working and earning money?" Well, I want you to go to work, but after some time, you will find that working 9 to 5 is no walk in the park, and, by comparison, being in class all day is a vacation.

There is no doubt that obtaining a college degree is a very expensive process. With the cost of tuition skyrocketing, the price tag of a higher education is, at best, a heavy financial burden and, at worst, a completely cost-prohibitive undertaking. When you factor in the exorbitant cost of books on top of that, most of us leave school deeply buried in debt. It is for this reason that you must be vigilant in ensuring a positive return on your investment. In other words, ensure that you are not squandering all that cash by getting the most out of the time spent in school.

This is where the maturity of an older student comes in to play. Older students are more likely to be self-motivated and to possess a higher level of focus needed to maximize their learning experience. Older students are less likely to be a disruptive force in class, but, in fact, are just the opposite, as they approach classes in a workman-like fashion while relishing the opportunity to learn.

In my youth, I hated school. I was a decent student, but I hated going to class. Jump to today, as a 32-year-old college student, I absolutely love it. I enjoy learning new things and broadening my world perspective. I enjoy hearing new ideas and engaging my classmates and professors in discussion. I attempt to immerse myself in the experience and soak up all available knowledge like a sponge.

The only aspect of college I find dissatisfactory is the numerous disruptions caused by some of the younger students. These kids obviously don't want to be there, as they incessantly blather with each other and play with their Smartphones. Then you have the other extreme, where they just sit there like zombies, and I often feel like I am the only one participating in the learning experience. As an older student with more world experience, I appreciate the opportunity that college is affording me while many younger students take this for granted. This is through no fault of their own—as I acted much

the same way at their age—but simply a reality of being young. These kids do not realize how good they have it and how many people across the world would die to be in their shoes. I often keep this perspective in mind as I navigate through my school day. Even when I am sitting in a class that is not particularly exhilarating, I often think to myself: "At least I am not at work."

Let's face it: Work stinks. For most of us work is tedious at best, and for others it's downright awful. That is unless you have a career where you truly get paid to do what you love, and 99 times out of 100, you must to have a degree to land a job like that. When I'm at work these days, I find myself wishing I were in class. While I'm in class, I'm ecstatic to not be at work. Don't get me wrong; I don't have a horrible job, and my work environment is rather pleasant. I honestly just prefer class that much more.

I know that many young people feel like school isn't for them, and that they would rather start making money. But the reality is that without a degree, they are likely to find themselves in an unfulfilling dead-end job, perpetually locked into a life of mediocrity. You may be asking yourself, "Hey, this guy is telling me not to go college right after high school, but what am I supposed to do if not work?" Well, here's the thing: I believe you should work for a few years and then go back to school. This way, you will soon learn from your own experiences that going to class is way better than going to work. After a few years in the workforce, you will have matured some and will have obtained a new perspective on the world around you. You will be highly motivated to not just attend class but to excel in your studies, in order to land a job that is not a soul-deadening drain on your psyche. The realization of just how rough the real world can be is just the type of a wake-up call young people need to understand how well they have it in school.

I am not calling for sweeping policy changes, and I certainly do not present my arguments as absolute fact. I simply wish to illustrate the value of going to college later than what has become the social standard. Yet I understand that we are all different and live under varying circumstances. Unquestionably, there are students who are more than ready for college straight out of high school and will quickly go farther than I ever will. I also grasp the fact that many of us are forced to go to college by our parents and don't really have much of a say in the matter. And I sympathize with those who, due to various circumstances—be they financial concerns or family obligations—are not in a place where they can go back to college. But for the recent high school graduate sitting on the fence, I say, wait a few years and then hit the books hard. For those who have been out of school for a long time but find themselves in place where they have the means to return, don't hesitate to go back.

I recognize that major life changes like these come with a certain level of apprehension, but having been out of school for over a decade, I feel that I came back at exactly the right time. I am smarter, stronger, and wiser now. I am ready to strive for excellence. And when I realize what obtaining a degree means for my life as a whole, I feel as though excellence is within my grasp.

As he lay dying

-in memory of my father

Carina Yun

As he lay dying, staring at the azure ceiling, cracked with chipped paint,
I wonder, how will I remember him ten years from now?

In a week he will have died,
His pallid thin blue legs now heavy bricks that he can no longer lift.

He lays there on a wooden bed built for my guest in the downstairs bedroom.
But I came home alone.

He is confined to a frayed creaky mattress –a betrayal of his limbs,
His flesh is rotting like a piece of old cheese.

At sunrise, I watched my mother's tears drip into a bowl of oatmeal.
The silver spoon she uses to feed him begins to dim his fraught face.

He sleeps alone in the cold room, still inhaling and exhaling,
every breath carrying him to a different world –a world I do not know.

I entered his room the other day with
the salty water peeling down my cheeks like the chipped paint on the ceiling.

He must have seen my eyes with their cracked red veins, dry.
I have no more tears, I said. My father says –

It's okay, Li Li.
He reaches out his gaunt-boned hands for me.

I reach over to cover both his weathered hands for just a moment
my bruised memories of him hidden from view.

Dan Ah Kim
acrylic

Corruption

Andrea Tembreull
steel

Serendipity

Trevor Capps
marker, acrylic on canvas

Positive Vibes

Dan Ah Kim
acrylic

Irrevocable Night

Nora Al-Raisi
acrylic/watercolor

Poison Ivy

Bridget Anthony-Hliorui
clay

Tunisian Tea Houses

Tracey Lee
oil on canvas

Self Portrait

Calliop Third Prize 2013

Andrea Tembreull

slip case tile, slate

Reflction Around the Corner

Gray Room Questions

Leann Anckner

I was offended. In fact, to this very day, I am still offended. I couldn't imagine ever doing such a thing on purpose and for such a dull and almost disturbing reason. I thought I was sent to this woman for comfort and support, but I felt teased instead. From floor to ceiling, the room was saturated in the blandest of grays. It smelled like crayons and winter breezes. I hated winter and I hated being there. The words of this woman repeated themselves in my head as tears started to form. They stayed glued to my eye ducts. The question she had asked was forever on repeat, and every time I heard it, my throat closed from what it suggested.

I never thought too much about this memory before, but the fact that it has stayed with me for all these years is proof that it had a huge impact on me. I was in seventh grade. I wasn't in a fight or being bullied; I was in a counselor's office. Me and several other kids my age were being talked to and questioned about our grades, particularly on our math grades. I now know the counselor was only trying to help and figure out the reason for our lacking skills in that specific subject, but I'm still disgusted with the question she asked me.

She had a stack of papers in front of her, which she studied carefully. Then she looked up and made a comment about how my grades in all other subjects were acceptable. Some were even impressive. After that, the commentary plummeted. She asked if I had heard that boys are generally better at math while girls are better at English. I nodded and was confused about where this was going. "Are you purposefully doing poorly in math because of that?"

You have got to be kidding me. She's kidding right? For a while, those are the only thoughts I could formulate. A steaming vibration flowed through my entire body. I felt nauseous, and my tears boiled out of fury. I shook my head, but I don't remember saying anything. I don't think it was physically possible for me to talk at that point. There was too much internal conversation going on about how anyone would do such a thing. I wanted to be sufficient at everything. Math was always difficult for me and I would cry over homework at night because I wanted to understand but I just couldn't grasp it.

As a child, I hated having blonde hair and blue eyes because I thought it made me look unintelligent. So having a woman who didn't even know me ask if I was faking failure just because I'm a girl made no sense to me. Since then, I still struggle with the same subjects but I don't let my struggle define me. I succeed; I just have to work harder than others. Replaying this memory has added to my character in a few ways. It has made me realize I want to help students who are the way I was, who really want to learn but encounter trouble subjects. I want to set the seed in young minds that intelligence and the craving of knowledge is one of the most attractive attributes a person can have.

Tides of War

Christopher Trebing

The desert ground rumbled as 40,000 men and horses marched forward as one.

"HALT," bellowed Marcus Licinius Crassus. He was the wealthiest man in the world, and he surveyed his legions from atop his horse with a sense of pride. This was an army he personally led and financed. The largest army ever raised by the Roman Republic, here under his command. His forces marched forward to crush the pitiful Persian army, the Parthians, arrayed against him. This would be an end to their entire army, and with it probably their entire empire. Syria would be his, and his alone. No longer would he have to answer to the short sighted Senate, or tolerate their intrigues and petty schemes. With the destruction of this Parthian army, the rest of Persia may well fall to him also. He could dwarf Alexander the Great with a single powerful drive through the Land of the Rivers, and east towards the Indus.

A gurgle next to him snapped Crassus back to reality. He looked to his right to see an arrow protruding from one of his body guard's neck. The man fell to the ground clawing at his throat and leaking out his life-blood before slowly stopping. Crassus growled. These accursed Parthians would not stop reigning arrows down upon them. Well, that would stop soon enough. He had dispatched his son Publius with 4,000 of his best light cavalry to chase off their horse archers. He should clear them up any time now; he had two to one odds against these spiteful Persians, and also a backbone of veteran legion cavalry commanders. He should return in time to flank their main army during the battle.

"CLOSE RANKS," he shouted, ordering his troops to attention. The call was repeated up and down the ranks by Legion criers. "GENERAL ADVANCE," he screamed. Again, the call was echoed, and his troops began to march forward. The main body of the Parthian army crested a hilltop not 300 yards in front of them. He did not need to give any more orders; his officers and soldiers knew what to do from here on. The Parthian army approached. He kneed his horse forward, together with his men. Off in the distance to his left and right he could see his cavalry returning, getting ready to flank the enemy force. His son would be a great general one day. Glancing back forward, he could see that a few Parthians were marching in front of their main force, holding something up. Curiously, Crassus retrieved his gold encrusted scope from his saddle bag. Lifting it to his eye, he took a second to focus it.

The world shattered. Crassus keeled over on his horse, though the beast kept moving, unaware of his riders plight. His son's head! They carried it mounted on a pike in front of their army. Screams began to ring out from the flanks of his army. If they had his head, that meant his cavalry force had not even been able to retrieve the body of its fallen commander. Which meant... A route. His cavalry was routed, but then how could they be assembling at his flanks. His bodyguard closed in to protect him, as understanding dawned on them. The Parthian horse archers had routed his cavalry and were now charging into his flanks with swords drawn. The Parthian infantry saw the confusion sowed amongst his ranks and charged forward. His world was over.

Two days later Crassus was a husk of the man he had been. Over half his men dead, and many of the remaining wounded. He and the remnants of his shattered army had not slept since that day. They retreated as fast as they could across the deserts of Syria, but it was no use. They could not outrun the Parthians in their state. And that was how

he found himself marching through the enemy camp. Marching to negotiate the surrender of his army, and negotiate passage back to Rome. They would probably demand the majority of his wealth, but it did not matter. He stared out at their camp with dead bloodshot eyes. The smells of unwashed bodies and foreign foods mixed together and wafted over him and his generals.

Thousands of Persians pressed in on his generals, taunting and jeering him and his fellow Romans. Suddenly one of his generals was pulled off of his horse. Screaming everywhere. His bodyguards drew swords, but it was no use. They began to fall as the thousands of Parthians pressed in, laughing and screaming as they cut apart his guard. Crassus pulled his sword and bellowed, half in fear, and half in rage for his lost son. He charged into them cutting and swinging his sword wildly. A Persian stepped forward and nonchalantly slid his sword across his horse's throat. It lurched into the ground spraying blood across the sand as Crassus tried to slice the man. Pain lanced across his side as a spear plunged through his ribs. Another pain in his back. The world darkened.

Calliope Second Prize 2013

Chanal Talmadge

photograph

Frozen

The Trucker and the Bandit

Laura Crepeau

I remember that night, I'd been double-bookin' –
Pushing my rig for three days with no sleep
'Cept maybe a couple hours here and there,
Needing to make up for that lost time at Rosie's
(Oh, but that was sweet. I do love her long hair.)
No shower, no shave, living on Mars bars and coffee,
Over weight by half, hauling two loads in one run.

It was in Arizona, I think, or maybe Texas – I forget.
Desolate place. Not even the CB would connect.
Nothin' but rocks and cactus. No towns, no farms,
Just miles and miles of more miles and miles.
Ahead was this three-mile grade I purely hated.
It would take everything this old rig had.
Starting fast, pushing hard, straining, slowing,
Slowing, almost stopping. Gravity pulling at my load.
By the time I got to the top, (if I got to the top)
I'd be fighting the rig to keep from sliding backwards.
Trucks got hijacked here, going so slow –
A gunman on foot could jump on your rig,
Stick a gun in your face, and blam;
That's-all-she-wrote, so long, goodbye.
I kept a .38 strapped to the seat, just in case.

I'd been driving for 12; had 6 on my log,
So sleepy, I rolled down the window for air.
Singing Johnny Cash, Merle Haggard, and Sting,
Even Christmas carols, 'cause I knew all the words.
It was nearing dawn when I hit that grade.
Darkest dark, No moon. Haze hiding the stars.
Perfect for the banditos. Not so good for me.
The first weak streaks of pre-dawn revealed
The crest of the hill. What a beautiful sight.
My rig was barely crawling, straining in low.
Keep it goin', keep it goin' Bess. Just a little more.
An old, lame dog could run faster than this.

I felt a jolt, heard a thump. My stomach did a flip.

My head snapped around, I looked sharply left.
Sneering back at me, right at my window, was a man –
A grizzled, bleary-eyed, scruffy, ugly old coot
An arm's length away. I was buzzard bait.
I froze for a moment, then, without a word,
I grabbed my .38 and shot him full in the face.
Just topping the hill, breathing hard, I floored it.
Pedal to the metal, shifting fast,
Figuring I might have to outrun his buddies.
What will I tell the cops, if anything?
I shot a man, and then I ran –
My God, what if he died?
Am I now a murderer?
A body in the desert can't be traced to me.
Nobody seems to be following; maybe I'm safe.

Twenty minutes later, I pulled into a truckstop
Swung down from my rig, trembling and spent.
Knowing I had one hell of a story to tell,
If any would believe it. If I dared tell it.
It was then that I noticed my rig's side mirror.
Shattered, a hole clean through the center.
I had defended myself against my reflection.
The "bandit" I shot –
Was me.

Pitch Counts in the Modern Era: Is Less Really More?

Evan McLeese

We live in the era of the pitch count, where a seemingly arbitrary number dictates when a pitcher exits a game and not the pitcher's performance. Starting pitchers are routinely being pulled from games with the lead intact, and, as baseball purists would tell you, far too early.

Just a few decades ago the number of pitches thrown was a non-issue, and pitchers would routinely rack up well over 150 tosses in a single outing. The expectations of a starting pitcher was that he would pitch until he was no longer effective, and starters went into games with the intent of completing them. Today, one is hard pressed to find starters tossing many more than 100 pitches in an outing.

The basic idea behind pitch counts is that in each hurler's arm exists a finite number of pitches, and when an organization abuses a pitcher, it is risking serious damage to its property. So by limiting a pitcher's workload in the short-term, teams ensure greater long-term success. However, this one-size-fits-all approach is flawed, as basic logic dictates that what will tax one player will not necessarily tax another.

Unfortunately, in this modern era of specialization, pitch counts appear to be a necessary evil. But it does not have to be that way. There is a rising school of thought that says strict pitch counts do more harm than good. A number of questions arise when contemplating pitch counts: Why are pitch counts being used in the first place, is the practice effective, and are there alternative organizational philosophies?

To understand why pitch counts are so prevalent in modern game, one must first understand their origin. It is a maze of diverging paths, but all roads can be traced back to one man: Tony Larussa. Prior to the late 80's, relief pitchers were used when needed and no strong caste system existed in bullpens. Sure, teams had a reliever who was dubbed the closer, but the closer was just as likely to come into the game in the seventh inning and throw two innings, as he was to come into the ninth and throw one.

That standard operating procedure changed in 1988 when Tony Larussa implemented a strict policy of only bringing his closer, Dennis Eckersly, in for one inning: the ninth inning. That year, Eckersly lead all of baseball with 45 saves, and went to his first of back-to-back World Series appearances for the Oakland A's. After Eckersly, the landscape of the sport was changed forever. Major League Baseball, like all sports, is a copycat league, and once Larussa began to implement his closer as a ninth-inning-save-situation-only pitcher, the rest of baseball followed suit.

So, how does the rise of the ninth inning closer relate to pitch counts? That question can be answered with a far simpler one: What makes the world go around? The answer, as always, is cold hard cash. The '80s and '90s saw the average annual salaries of ballplayers skyrocket. The highest paid player in 1979 made $1 million. By 1998 that number was $15 million. Gone were the days of bullpens full of cheap relief pitchers that could easily be discarded and replaced by the next warm body waiting in line. Bullpens were now ruled on high by millionaire closers with gigantic egos to match, compelling managers to remove their starters early, so their closers could get some work. Teams found themselves in the position of having to appeal to their closers' ego, and ultimately justify their investment, by chasing what ESPN's Jim Caple calls, "…the most overrated stat in baseball…"

1988 not only marked the dawn of the ninth inning closer, but also the year that the pitch count became an official stat. Pitch counts were now listed in box scores for fans and media members alike to scrutinize. This opened the door for managers league-wide to be second-guessed on a nightly basis. If the manager left his starter in and that starter blew a lead late in the game, fans could turn to the box score and see that the pitcher had thrown 126 pitches and immediately question the manager for not going to his closer. This marked a paradigm shift across the league, where managers no longer managed at the ends of ballgames but rather put the game on autopilot. When the ninth inning rolled around, they went to their closers, and if the closer blew the lead, it was his fault. The manager had made the standard move, and his decision could not be questioned.

As the years flew by, bullpens became increasingly specialized. Teams no longer just had a 9th inning closer, but often an 8th inning and 7th inning specialist as well. Pitch counts for starters became increasingly scrutinized, and starting pitchers entered games with the mind-set of pitching six quality innings rather than going the distance. Then in 2000, Baseball Prospectus writers Kieth Woolen and Rany Jazayerli released a groundbreaking study. They analyzed what they dubbed pitcher abuse points and found that, "repeated outings that go beyond 100 pitches can, over time, cause the kind of chronic overuse injury which may render the pitcher incapacitated or ineffective."

In an era where pitch counts were already shrinking, teams were now being told that if they overworked their multi-million dollar prize investments they might break them. If the '90s marked the complete game pitcher becoming an endangered species, the 2000s saw this rare breed become all but extinct. 632 complete games were thrown in 1984. By 2004, the number dwindled to 150, and with good reason. If a club pays its 24-year-old ace $7.5 million a year, it has great incentive to insure he is healthy and contributing to the organization for many years to come (not to mention that those types of stud pitchers don't exactly grow on trees).

With different expectations heading into games, and clubs fiercely protecting their investments, pitchers train and prepare for games differently than they used to. Most throwing programs these days have their roots in 1980s injury-rehabilitation programs that arose after Tommy John's surgery became more common, and organizations began to give more credence to the voice of the medical community. These restrictive programs call for the gradual lengthening of distance from 30 feet to 120 feet as the elbow or shoulder recovers from surgery. The problem with these programs is that healthy arms are being treated like injured arms.

But not all players subscribe to the 120 program. Twenty-one year old Diamondbacks Rookie Trevor Bauer, whose pregame workouts are already legendary, throws long toss up to 400 feet on the day of his starts, the day after his starts, and every day in between. It makes sense that to prepare for a role as starting pitcher, one would throw and throw often. Baseball is the only sport where the counterintuitive thinking of limiting preparation, and thus stunting the strength and endurance needed for the vocation, reigns supreme. But it is not just a handful of young rebels bucking the conventions of restrictive throwing programs. Entire organizations are beginning to change their philosophies on preparation and pitch counts, and the era of the complete game pitcher may be poised for a comeback.

Nolan Ryan threw 5,386 big league innings, ranking him 5th of all time. Over the course of his 27-year major league record, Ryan won 324 games, threw 222 complete games, tossed a record 7 no hitters (the last of which came at the ripe old age of 44), and set the career mark for strikeouts at a staggering 5,714. Ryan is considered one of the

most dominating pitchers of all time, and knows what it takes to succeed in the long term as a major league pitcher.

Today Ryan is principal owner, president and CEO of the Texas Rangers. Ryan understands that modern athletes are, if anything, bigger and stronger than they have ever been, and he is ready to stop coddling his starting pitchers. Ryan has eliminated the use of the pitch count to determine how long pitchers stay in games. He has issued an edict at every level of the organization for pitchers to throw deeper into games, extend their arms, and push past the physical and mental limits they have been made to believe they possess.

Has Ryan's experiment worked? It's hard to say. It's difficult to find reliable data on injury rates if that is the barometer of the ideology's effectiveness. Just a few weeks ago, Colby Lewis, a linchpin of the Rangers starting rotation, was rendered unavailable after season-ending elbow surgery. If success on the field is the measuring stick, then Ryan's plan is a smash hit.

Ryan took over as the Rangers' president in 2008 when they gave up the most runs in baseball with a miserable team ERA of 5.37. That number has been lowered every year since then, and the staff posted a sparkling 3.79 ERA in 2011, good for 4th best in the American League. But the numbers don't just look prettier; they are translating into wins. In 2008, the Rangers won 79 games. Their win total has increased in every successive season, culminating in 96 wins last season and a second consecutive trip to the World Series. However, just how much of this success can be directly attributed to the shift in the organization's approach to pitch counts is anybody's guess.

So, should the use of pitch counts be eliminated league wide? The short answer is no. However, teams need to break free from the rigid dogma of the pitch count and realize that pitch counts are merely a tool. When wielded properly, they can be a very effective tool, but managers must learn to look past the indoctrinated tenet of the 100 pitch limit and understand that there are a number of factors to look at when deciding when to remove a pitcher from the game. The number of pitches he has thrown is just one of them. Ultimately, what needs to be understood is every player is not the same and all pitch counts are not equal. 115 pitches may be a lot for Stephen Strasburg, while Justin Verlander may barely break a sweat. Managers must also look at pitch counts within the context of the game the pitches were thrown in. 100 pitches by a grizzled veteran in a two-hit shutout bear no resemblance to a bright eyed youngster tossing 100 in a six inning eight-hitter.

There are valid reasons that pitchers don't go as far in games as they use to. The modern game is a very different animal. The rise of the Internet age has placed a plethora of videos, charts, graphs, and other such sabermetric (mathematical and statistical analysis of baseball records) wizardry at the fingertips of all managers. Today's athletes are the best the sport has ever seen. Middle infielders are no longer simply defensive magicians, but often carry big sticks as well. Pitchers can't put it cruise control for the back half of every lineup. So the days of hurlers tossing thirty plus complete games in a season have gone the way of the dinosaur. But there is no reason that modern pitchers couldn't finish fifteen to twenty games a year. As soon as teams take the kid gloves off their starters, proceed to train them properly, and stop chasing arbitrary stats such as the save, we will see a pitching renaissance and the triumphant return of the iron man starter. Pitchers will throw deep into games and will not be removed until the opposing squad's bats dictate a change. For many a baseball purist, this rebirth can't come soon enough.

The Unforgettable Birthday

Maryam Alrisheh

On that day on September 10th, 2011, at the exact time that I was born twenty-one years ago, I got a phone call from my uncle. His voice was barely coming out of his throat. He said, "I know your mom is sleeping, but give her the phone - it is urgent." That was unusual and my heart at that moment was getting squeezed as a lemon on an open wound. I felt that it was all about my grandfather who was getting treated for cancer at a hospital in Jordan. However I stood in front of my mom's sleeping body and hesitated to wake her up. I took my last steps towards her slowly as if I was walking on shattered glass. I placed my palm on her shoulder which made her wake up, and I gave her the phone. I took two steps backwards and watched the reaction of my mom. I still remember her silence and the locked tears in her eyes. A few minutes later, my mom's patience gave me strength to wake up my brothers and father to tell them the news. It was shocking, and until this moment, I cannot believe that that beloved man left us here in this scary world.

The day's light turned into dark rays of emotions. The emotions that were amazingly cheerful because of the birthday greetings and wishes I had received turned severely down with the news of my grandfather's death. For my family, it was like a slap on everyone's face which made them unable to believe the sad news. Some were surprised and the others accepted the will of God to end the life of my grandfather. Condolences were the speech of each person who attended my home to stand by my family in those sad moments.

I knew he loved me dearly, more than anyone else. I went down stairs to follow my mom who hurried to get the Quran, the Muslim holy book. I felt the need to give him back his love and care by reading the Quran on behalf of his soul. I went up to my room and grabbed my copy of the Quran and froze in my place. I turned back to hide my face and cried very hard until I had relieved all the mixed emotions that had gathered in the last ten minutes.

The steps down stairs again were harder than the first one because I knew everyone was crying in their own way. Silence was taking over the house. I entered the living room and walked in heavy steps towards the sofa in the corner and sat there. For a whole hour, all what I heard was the movement of the lips while reading, saw tears coming out heavily from eyes, and felt the tightness of everybody's chest. That was the turning point of my way of thinking in life. It is not easy to have people crying and missing someone that was with them a couple of months ago. Many thoughts came into my mind as I listened carefully to what his sons and daughters said about him being strong and effective in life.

I learned from my beloved grandfather to be passionate in loving others. He taught me how to be generous in taking care of those whom I care about. Each person needs a different treatment depending on his personality type. Some need attention more than others and some need support and others need someone to count on. I became socially more active and generously supportive to my friends and family. I am ready to help out the way my grandfather was to us. I feel that he never died because his love was left over for the next generation. I try to remember every single one of his reactions in many situations. He taught me how to care, to love and how to be generous.

An unpleasant incident on a special day turned out to be a blessing from God. The

death of my grandfather polished my birthday with dark shades, but I chose to open the window and let the day light illuminate them. Life goes on when we choose to move on with it. With optimism and hope everything becomes enjoyable.

Kelly Henrickson
acrylic/lino print

Self Portrait with Stripes

Calliope Third Prize 2013 - Fiction

The Little Rocky Run

David M. Crann

Where the bubbling backcountry brook began, it's hard to say. I was always more concerned with where it ended. From an early age on, I had dubbed it The Little Rocky Run after the neighborhood I was born and raised in. Many times I had traveled down the stream, but no matter how far I got, I always seemed to find myself in a spot similar to where I started. Little did I know the end was much closer than I had thought, but it would take every lesson I had ever learned to reach it.

I was consumed with an urgent need to see my troubled friend and lover, Ali. I called her cell phone, but it went straight to voicemail. Plagued by an unexplainable apprehension, I decided to make my way over to her house. I grabbed my red Ron Jon skateboard and hit the street. I was halfway there when Ali sent me a text message saying that she needed a couple of hours to get ready; so there I was with nothing to do but skate.

And skate I did. Through traffic lights, alleyways, and shopping centers, I went deeper and deeper into a suburban labyrinth. Eventually I came to a stop at a cul-de-sac in a strange neighborhood. The streets were covered with neon-colored sidewalk chalk. In front of me, wedged in a gutter, was a brand new soccer ball. I walked over to the gutter, and after making sure no one was watching, I scooped it up, reserving it as a gift for Ali.

As I walked away, I was struck with guilt. I looked down at the brand new soccer ball. It was perfect. However, I also realized that it probably belonged to some little kid; I pictured him on the verge of tears, looking for the soccer ball, but unable to find it. For all I knew, that ball could have been his world. I couldn't take it. I skated back to where I found it and without stopping rolled it right back into the gutter, like a bowling ball.

It was then that I realized I was being watched. I whirled around. Coming down the sidewalk were two old ladies. One of them was dressed in a yellow coat, and the other was walking a small dog. I watched them as they disappeared into a wooded trail I hadn't even known was there. After a couple of moments, I followed them. The dilapidated trail led me into a dark thicket that ended at a small playground. I looked around, but the two old ladies were nowhere to be found.

The playground sat on a bed of mulch hidden among the trees. There were a couple of picnic tables, a see-saw, and a green power box. The power box was spray painted with the picture of a bride and groom kissing. I sat on an empty swing set and made a wish that I had something to give Ali. I called her, but she didn't answer, so I left her a long message. I wanted to stay at the playground forever, but I had to move on. I was thirsty, and I left in search of nourishment.

On my way out of the neighborhood, I noticed the red stop sign of a school bus parked on the curb. Behind the school bus, nestled in the underbrush, was an old soccer ball! I couldn't believe my eyes. Partially deflated and muddy, it was purple, pink, and

printed with the word "Princess". It was the perfect gift. I gratefully picked it up and continued skating. Before I skated out of the neighborhood, I looked back and saw the two old ladies standing by the school bus.

Faster and faster I skated until before I knew it, I was cutting through the parking lot of East Point shopping center. The shopping center was a long colonnade that opened to an expansive parking lot littered with trees and street lamps. The parking lot was always packed with cars, and that day it was no different. Beneath the colonnade's orange tiled roof and behind the massive columns were all types of stores.

First I skated past the stores, scoping them out for any enemies. Then I circled the parking lot, dodging cars and pedestrians, the soccer ball safely secured in my arms like a football. The store I chose was Starbucks, for my thirst had now become overwhelming. As I approached the front of the store, I was greeted by an old friend.

He was a Frenchman named Toto who had an uncanny resemblance to Napoleon Bonaparte. Although he was considerably older than me, we had become close friends through politics. He was devoted to writing, but the business hadn't been good to him. There he stood, in front of Starbucks, dressed in a long black trench coat, smoking a Benson & Hedges.

As he saw me, he waved me over to him. The initial smile on his face quickly faded into a stern gaze. "Listen to everything I say," he commanded in a low whisper. "They are going to try and take it from you. You can't let them have it. And this whole place, it's rigged! The whole world is watching you. You have five seconds to tell them anything you want. Go ahead."

"I love you all. Stop the racism. And read the Bible. It's a matter of life and death!" I could barely hold back my tears. I slowly dropped to my knees and put my forehead to the ground.

When I stood up, Toto shook my hand and nodded toward the window behind him. Inside was Mitch—a long time ago he had stolen everything I had. He looked up from a Spanish book he was reading and saw me. He flashed me a sardonic grin and walked outside. "Hey, whatcha got there?" he asked, eyeing my soccer ball. I looked at Toto, and he shot me a cautious glance. "Can I see that?" Mitch said.

"No, it's mine."

"What? Why you li'l… gimme that," Mitch said, lunging for the soccer ball. I sidestepped him, jumped on my skateboard, and skated off as fast I could.

In an instant I had disappeared and was cruising down a backstreet, full speed toward Ali. I saw many distractions on the way there, but I never lost sight of my final destination. I didn't stop until I was almost there. I pulled out my cell phone and called Ali. "Hey," she answered with a yawn.

"Yo. Wanna meet up now? I'm right by your house."

"Yeah! What do you want to do?"

"Well, we can take a walk. I know a really cool playground. How's that sound?"

"Okay, meet me at the usual spot in ten minutes."

The usual spot was a grocery store near Ali's house. I skated over there in no time, for I was eager to give her the soccer ball. Nearly an hour later, I saw her crossing the

street, dressed in a blue hoodie. She seemed to notice me as she crossed the street but did a good job at hiding it. "Hey," I said as she came within arm's reach.

"Hey!"

"I have a surprise for you," I said, handing her the soccer ball. She took one look at it and said, "I don't want that."

"What? Why? I thought you told me you wanted a soccer ball," I responded incredulously.

"Yeah, I do. But not that one. It's dirty," she said, handing it back to me. "You keep it."

"Whatever. Your loss. So, you ready for that walk?"

"Actually, I'm a little hungry. Let's go get something to eat first. Do you have any money?"

"Yeah. A little. I was going to save it for later, but we can see what they have."

"I just want a candy bar," she said, suddenly leaning over and giving me a long kiss on the lips.

In the grocery store, Ali headed straight for the candy aisle. I lagged behind and called my bank to find out exactly how much money I had in my account. I caught up with Ali in the candy aisle. "Please take the soccer ball," I said. "I don't want it."

"I can't take it," she said. "It belongs to you."

"But I don't want it," I whined. "I'm not worthy." I sat down on the floor and put my head into my hands. Ali tapped on my shoulder. There was a nervous look on her face.

"Let's go," she said.

"Why can't we just stay here forever? It's so peaceful. I like it here." But Ali was serious about leaving. She pulled me up and dragged me out of the store.

Back outside, we sat down on a curb. She pulled out a big chocolate bar from inside her hoodie. "You shouldn't have stolen that," I said.

"I know."

"Then why'd you do it?"

"Oh, give me a break. I've been doing this since I was little."

"What if someone saw you?" I asked.

"Don't be silly," she started, but was interrupted as a security guard approached us.

"Hey there," he said, studying our faces. "This is a no-loitering zone, but I'll let you guys stay for a couple of minutes. Please take your time." He took one last good look at us and disappeared into the grocery store.

Something wasn't right. I had met many mall cops in my day, but never one so hospitable. Then I remembered what Toto had told me. About how they were going to try and take it from me, but I couldn't let them have it. Instantly everything became clear. I knew what I had to do. "Ali," I said. "You know how many cameras they have in that grocery store? We need to get out of here now!" I grabbed her hand, and we broke into a frantic run.

The only thing on my mind was escape. Behind the grocery store there was a chain link fence and beyond that a thornbush that stretched as far as the eye could see. Time was running out. There was no choice. I hit the soccer ball over the fence like a volley ball. Then I helped Ali over the fence. Finally, with a single leap, I crossed the fence myself.

Desperately I clawed through the thorns, making a way for Ali. Bleeding, I emerged from the thornbush, soccer ball in hand, and Ali by my side. I kept running, but Ali was having trouble keeping up with me. "Why are we running?" she gasped.

"No one knows these streets better than me," I said, my natural instincts kicking in.

"Uhm, okay. Well, where are we going?"

"The Little Rocky Run."

Nestled deep in the woods, the little rocky run was our only chance at salvation. But getting there was not going to be an easy task. It would take every lesson I had ever learned. There were several major roads to cross, plus there was no telling where the cops might be.

First we had to cut through Lakeside. It was a small neighborhood of condominium buildings that bordered a shallow lake. The neighborhood had its own pools, tennis courts, and gym; it even had its own security force. The security guards vigilantly patrolled the neighborhood at all hours of the day on golf carts. We cut behind one of the tall condominium buildings and emerged on a thin path that went along the outskirts of the lake. Ahead of us was a gazebo.

The gazebo consisted of a walkway and a roofed sitting area directly above the lake. I walked over the water to the end of the gazebo. Ali sat on a bench. The sound of rushing water told me the water that filled the lake had been diverted from a nearby stream; I looked around, but I couldn't see one. I leaned over the edge of the gazebo and spat into the water. Catfish came to the surface and poked at my saliva. Then it hit me. On one side of the lake there was a stretch of thick vegetation. The water must be coming from underground, and that was the way to go!

Ali and I left the gazebo and headed toward the vegetation, which turned out to camouflage a gully filled with jagged rocks. "We have to cross here," I said to her. The bed of rocks snaked out of sight around a long white wall. Crossing was tricky. The slippery rocks moved with the slightest pressure. Furthermore, there was no telling how many copperheads had made their home in the numerous crevices. Carefully we made our way across the rocks and around the wall.

Past the wall, we came upon a hill. In the middle of the hill there was a lone fig tree. "Oh, look at that tree. It's so pretty. Can we take a rest?" Ali asked me.

"Yeah, I guess," I said. Slowly we made our way up the hill and stopped underneath the tree. Ali lay down on the grass, and I sat down next to her. "You know we aren't that far from your house," I said. "See those trees over there? On the other side is your neighborhood."

"I like it here."

"We should make love right here."

"What! What if someone sees us?" Ali stammered.

"You didn't seem to care if someone saw us when you stole that candy bar."

"Hmm, good point," she said, rolling over and giving me a passionate kiss. The soccer ball fell from my hands, rolled down the hill, and came to a stop next to a rusty gutter. "I need to go get that," I said.

"Just leave it."

"I can't. Excuse me. I'll be right back." I walked down to the gutter and peered into the dark depths of the sewers. Something deep in the gutter seemed to be staring back at me. It whispered to me in an ancient tongue, telling me to leave the ball and go make love to Ali. I shuddered, picked up the ball, and ran back to Ali. "We gotta keep moving," I said.

We made our way to the top of the hill where there was a long field. In one corner of the field was a baseball diamond. We jogged across the field and dipped across an empty street entering into a neighborhood of single-family homes. We ran through the streets until we came to a dead end. Behind a house at the bottom of the street, I could see a highway. Beyond that highway lay the little rocky run, but blocking our way was a fence. We hopped it. In the backyard there was a fountain, flowers of every color, and a statue of cupid; it was a shame that not many people would get to appreciate its beauty because of the fence.

To cross the highway, we had to cut through a church next to the backyard. At one end of the small church parking lot there was a cop car. The officer inside was studying a small monitor. We hurried past him unseen and crossed the busy street. Before we entered the woods that bordered the highway, I shot a victorious glance back toward the cop car.

A small trail led us through the woods down to the little rocky run. I took the soccer ball and dropped it into the stream. The numerous moss-covered rocks in the stream prevented it from floating downstream. And there it floated, suspended in the water. Next I thoroughly cleaned the ball. When I was done, I handed it to Ali. "Here," I said. "Now it's clean."

"Thanks, but I still can't take it."

"Why?"

"You're going to need that!"

"Really? What am I going to do with a soccer ball?"

"You'll see."

I Will Die on Saturday

Angeles Arredondo

My grandfather used to say, "I have ten fingers in my two hands, and I love them equally. Likewise, I have ten children, and I love them equally." I respect, admire, and love my grandfather. When I was a child, I lived next to my grandparents' yellow house, which was the place for all my family to gather. My family reunions were frequent, almost every Sunday. During childhood, I spent plenty of time with my grandfather, who helped me with my homework, drove me to sports activities, and gave me a great deal of advice. My grandfather, who was the leader of my family, was a strong, polite, and hard working man. Additionally, my grandfather gave the whole family our values: unity, fraternity, respect, acceptance, religion, responsibility, and love.

By following my family's values and my heart, I was a blessed, active, and family-oriented young woman. First, I was a member for ten years, of a national Catholic organization in Mexico called Juvenile Apostleship in which groups of energetic and young people get together to participate in activities and to worship God. Annually, during the fall, we had a national reunion, and for one weekend, my local organization was the host. Every community from the six different states had to prepare a speech for all of us, around 400 young people.

Fortunately, I was one of those chosen to give a speech for my local organization. Previously, we had four months to organize the event and to write our speech. We had been looking forward to this event for a long time. The day started early, at 7:00 a.m. My sisters, who were some of the group's organizers, and I were already at the school where the national meeting would be held. Just after, my brother, cousins, and some of my friends, who were part of the movement too, arrived. The meeting started with prayers, songs of praise, and the first speech. Throughout the day, there were games, songs, and activities in small groups. I was so glad because I enjoyed those activities with everyone around. Moreover, I was so excited and nervous because my speech would be opening the day's activities.

While my siblings, cousins, and I were singing and praising God, my grandfather was dying at the hospital. After his brain stroke two years previously, my grandfather's health had deteriorated. Afterward, doctors detected his Alzheimer's disease. Principally, my father and my oldest aunt were the ones who took care of my grandfather during his illness. During those two years, my grandmother, father, aunts, and uncles had taken my grandpa to the hospital many times, but they did not know this time would be the last time. In fact, the doctors explained that my grandfather was in critical condition, and his heart had started to weaken. Later, the doctors asked my closest family members to start saying goodbye to him. All my grandfather's children, except the oldest one, said goodbye to him. In the next few minutes, my grandfather's children said goodbye to their hero, their life's idol. My uncles and aunts were witness to all their father's stages as a strong and young father, as a loyal husband, and as a loving grandpa. They saw him as the strong man he was, and then as the fragile body he descended into. Lastly, my oldest aunt arrived at the hospital. My grandfather was waiting for his oldest child, my aunt. When his heart stopped, on Saturday around 7:00 p.m., my grandfather's oldest child was holding his hand.

At the national event, everyone was waiting for the next activity. Then, my oldest sister came back from the hospital, and said, "Please, I need to talk to you." My siblings,

cousins, and I got together. My sister said, "Our grandfather is now with God."

I felt that time had stopped and the wind had gotten cold. Everyone started crying. I was in shock and started shaking. After that, my oldest sister began comforting everyone. She said, "We have to be strong for our parents because they will need us." Then we embraced, showing each other our fraternity. We were, and are still to this day, a unified family, as my grandpa taught us to be.

We went home. I was there, at the same yellow house where we had all my family reunions, but now it was full of friends, relatives, and neighbors. We were at the same place where I had spent my childhood with my grandpa and that had all those pictures on the walls that were showing my family's story. Those photographs were of every marriage and sweet fifteens in my family, as well as pictures of the whole family. My entire family was waiting for my grandfather's body, and I could smell the aroma from the coffee in the kitchen. I could hear, see, and feel the crying and pain of all my family. Also, I could hear the loud sound of the train that runs just across the street. More friends of my family arrived to give condolences and flowers that smelled the entire house. The time passed slowly while we were waiting for my grandfather's body. Then, his body arrived, and the tragic news became a cruel reality. This was the last time my grandpa would be physically at his house. The body of the leader of my family was placed in the living room and located around him were four white and long candles. My grandmother was devastated, and my father, aunts, and uncles tried to contain their tears and suffering in front of her. All my cousins were distressed, even the ones who did not visit my grandparents frequently, because my grandpa had the gift for making everyone feel special.

During the next hours, I could hear different testimonies about how my grandpa influenced my family and friends. One of my cousins, whose birthday it was, was heartbroken, and our oldest aunt told her, "Your grandpa is now resting, and this is the best gift that he could have given you." My cousin started to cry. Everyone recognized the strength of spirit of my oldest aunt. Another testimony was from my oldest cousin who said, "I am losing the most important person in my life. He is my confidant, friend, and adviser." Then my sister who had a close and extraordinary connection with my grandpa said, "I will miss my second father." Our neighbors were remembering how my grandfather helped them in different circumstances. I was joyful to see that every person who met my grandfather could say, "I was witness of his productive and wonderful life."

The next morning, which was sunny and windy, my sisters and I went back to the national event. The day's activities were beginning, and songs of praise were coming from the auditorium. The group organizers were waiting for us. They asked me if I was okay to give the speech, and I could not answer. Afterward, we started with a silent pray in a small group. I asked God, "My Lord, help me to complete this speech. Let me do it for my grandpa." My heart was shaking and my hand was strongly gripping my sister's hand. Tears streamed from my eyes. I took a deep breath. I wiped my tears, and I started my speech.

Many times my grandpa had said, "I will die on Saturday." I do not know how he knew it, but he did. My grandfather is the root of my family, who reminds us who we are, where we were from, and where we will go. After this memorable day, some members of my family continue to suffer badly because of my grandfather's passing. To me, my grandfather was, is, and will be a sunrise on the beach, the happiness in my heart, and the strength of my soul.

Writing in Books

Laura Crepeau

I was raised to never, NEVER write in books. Schoolbooks, of course, didn't belong to me, and had to be returned at the end of the year for the next grade to use. You could get in big trouble for writing in schoolbooks; instead, you made notes on your own paper. You don't write in library books, either. Same logic. The only books that actually belonged to me, as a child, were story books. No reason to write in them; the author had already done all the writing that was needed.

After I moved to DC to begin my life as an Adult (I was quite impressed with myself, and not a little scared), one thing I did to reinforce that idea of myself was to buy my first book. I considered that I was starting My Library. And I knew that having a personal library was one of the markers of the adult I wanted to be. I bought Sonnets from the Portuguese, because I had really loved Browning's work when we read it in senior English. I wrote my name inside the front cover. I still have that book, all these years later.

I bought other books -- Thomas Costain is the one author whose name stands out in my memory. And I wrote my name in the front cover of each and every one. Almost. At the time I bought my first very own Bible, I couldn't quite bring myself to write my name in that.

Then I met some folks who ran the local USO, and they asked me to go to their church. It was a Baptist church, the kind that everybody brought their Bibles to every service -- and read them daily, too. These people marked in their Bibles! They underlined in red and black and blue, and made notes in the margins. My eyebrows were sure raised at that behavior! The pastor explained that while the words in the Book were holy, the book itself was just paper and ink - made by man, just like any magazine or novel or textbook, and likely on the same presses. He threw it on the floor and stepped on it to make his point. Then he picked it up, opened it, and read the holy words with great reverence. Shortly after, I began underlining passages that had special meaning for me, so I could easily find them again.

In most of the churches I attended in the next few years, the messages were heavy on "the wages of sin are death", and "the wrath of God is upon the sinner," so lots of this kind of passage got marked in my Schofield Reference Bible (King James Version, of course) with notes in the margins as to the location of other similar verses. After that, there was no reason not to mark in the other books I owned. Comments both laudatory and derogatory appeared in the margins. My inner critic had full reign. In that I'm not unlike Thomas Jefferson. He went through his Bible with a pencil, crossing out any passages he didn't think should be there. See? I'm in good company.

One telling event happened when I left the mainline church, and began attending an independent ministry. The message at the independent was much more centered on the love of God, the caring communion with the Spirit, the believer's place in the family

of brethren, the availability of a joyful, fully actualized life. I had to buy a new Bible. I needed to underline or highlight a whole different set of verses. I'm rather happy with what that says about my personal growth.

Today, if you were to pick up any of the books I own on investing, on cooking, on Paganism, on brain function, on nutrition, on sign language, psychology, herbalism, shamanism, history, genealogy, or myriad other topics, you'd find notes and underlining and highlighting throughout. That is, if the book was any good. Can you imagine a cookbook without recipe changes or quantity notes? If it's clean, it's unused. And what does that say about the quality of the book? In some nonfiction books, I write "bullshit" in the margins, and then get into arguments with subsequent readers. I still tend not to write anything but my name and date of purchase in fiction books. Um... unless the proofreader in me has a pen nearby when there's a typo or grammatical error. But that's another rant.

My husband doesn't write in books. Not even his name. I'm very careful not to have a writing instrument nearby when I'm reading one of his books. It creates a bit of tension. Oh, not between me and Tom -- between me and the book that cries out to be marked with the proof of my caring about its content.

I Hate Lucy

Elena Dominguez-Black

This is a story about a girl named Lucy and how she showed me the existence of bad people. She did this by being a bad friend. An unspoken assumption lingers around good friends, a small thing that relationships are based on. That thing would be trust. Lucy showed me what it meant to be betrayed.

I met Lucy in the fourth grade. I had moved to Frankfurt, Germany a year before and remained nearly as lonely and isolated as when I first showed up two months late to my third grade classroom. A point of soreness for me was the quick onset of my awkward stage. I didn't realize that my dark waist-length hair and straight cut bangs stuck to my face and made me look unkempt. My teeth were so crooked it later took over two years of braces to fix, and I wore these awful oval shaped, thin-framed glasses. At the time, I thought they were just the absolute coolest because they had a Golden Snitch on the side. I was thin, gangly, and tall for my age (which is hilarious because I never grew another inch while my classmates would later tower over me) and thus, my self-esteem was the size of amoeba and I was painfully shy. I withdrew from my classmates, who didn't seem to care either way. Despite this, I did have some friends in my school. And up until a point, I thought Lucy was one of them. From the admittedly little that I remember of her, she had chin length blonde hair, freckles, and a very brazen, cocky, self-assured way of acting, like she was the proverbial bomb. I met her through one of my few other friends and we rode the same bus, so I supposed, in my child mind, that meant friendship.

I took a charter bus to school. The American Embassy had a large compound where most of the people who worked for the US government or military lived, and this large compound was quite a ways away from my school. The international school I attended was expensive and that meant they could afford to hire charter buses to drive kids around. In those long forty-five minute bus rides, small details like the comfortable chairs that could lean back were appreciated (despite the absolutely hideous multicolored geometric patterns on the seat covers). The real test of how fancy our school bus was - it had seatbelts. What a novel and unique concept: seatbelts on a bus!

The afternoon I credit with changing my life was very normal. On that long ride home, on those glorious charter buses, I sat next to Lucy, with our winter coats piled around us like a nest, huddled together and hunched down, unnecessarily I might add, because it's not like we could see over the tops of the seats anyway. The few kids scattered about were just as tiny and just as absorbed in their own little worlds, so the bus was otherwise quiet, except for the low constant rumble of the engine beneath us.

One of these tiny kids was a boy named Brad, who sat just a few rows behind Lucy and me. At this point, I will take a moment to discuss what I remember about Brad, or, to be more precise, the lack thereof. I can't for the life of me recall any details about this seemingly important person in my childhood. All I can remember is his name and

his bowl cut that made him look like Jim Carrey in Dumb and Dumber. He must have been somewhat interesting because whatever he was like, it warranted a little girl crush.

I define "little girl crush" as those shallow, simplistic initial forays into adolescent romance. The thought process behind this concept being: He is "cute", thus I like him. These crushes have the lasting impact of cutting your nails, as showcased by my utter failing to remember anything about a guy who played an important part in this story.

On that afternoon, Lucy and I sat huddled and hunched down for a reason because we were whispering, and we whispered because we were little girls gossiping. I again draw a distinction between child gossip and any other kind, because of how lackluster and harmless child gossip tends to be, an extreme naivety, innocence in the scandal of picking your nose or not knowing how to ride a bike. But the gossip Lucy and I discussed began to turn to adolescent gossip. I define this as gossip that can feel as destructive as the knowledge of an extramarital affair or an embezzlement, but is much pettier and marginally more innocent. Ask any teenage girl what the most common subject of gossip is and they will answer something along the lines of "relationships". Who likes whom, and who is dating whom and who just broke up with whom.

"Who do you like?" Lucy asked me.

I can't remember if I answered right away, or if I hesitated, embarrassed to say. But I did answer. Even if I did hesitate, it wasn't for long and it was more out of shyness than anything else. The fact that we were just gossiping did not enter my mind. I had an assumption about Lucy, one that I did not question. Why wouldn't I tell her who I liked? The very idea that anything could go wrong was absent from my thought process. I would tell her, she would know a secret, and that was as secure as money in the bank. When it came down to it, I thought nothing of it.

"I like Brad."

Faster than I ever saw anyone move, Lucy sprung up and in one fluid movement she twisted around on her knees and grabbed the top of the chair to lift her head over the tip and shouted a single sentence before I even registered what was happening.

"Hey Brad, guess who like you?!"

That single sentence hit me like a brick. I barely remember what happened after that. My memories are a slow, jumbled blur. I remember crying and that the tears streaked the inside of my glasses, clouding my vision. I remember Lucy laughing. I remember scrambling out of the bus once it mercifully came to a halt.

I think I said, "I hate you."

I didn't speak much to Lucy afterwards. I recall a few days before leaving Germany and moving back to the US, at least a year after that bus ride; she asked me if I still liked Brad. I realized it was all just a joke to her and she never knew how much she hurt me. I don't think she ever will.

Lucy and the story of my first betrayal taught me the value of the value of good friends and what being a good friend means - essentially everything Lucy wasn't. I became a confidant for many people because I knew the value of the secrets and feelings people were entrusting to me. She taught me so much and for that reason, however much I hate Lucy, deep down I have to thank her.

Daughter's Letter Home

Carina Yun

Mother,
–It is beginning of morning twilight in Istanbul.

The sun has arrived early this morning, drawing a bright orange line
above the blue mosque. The soothing accent of morning prayers

over a microphone woke me. It lifted my chest and sang me a love song,
Allahu Akbar, Allahu Akbar… he sang.

And for that instant, my body filled with the utmost warmth.
But the frosty black sea air has a way of seeping in through the louvered windows.

Ma –the women cover their faces here.
Yesterday evening, when I took the ferry over to Asia,

I met her –

she was encased like a Matryoshka doll –the color of soot, but her
warm brown irises locked deeply into mine. I was certain she smiled

at me from behind the veil. And I wanted to open my creaky lamb voice.
But instead I stared at the dark stodgy man sitting beside her.

What would have happened if I'd told her I'd love to see her smile?

He would have yelled at me! Would I have sinned before God
–for wanting to see happiness radiate on a woman's face?

Mother,
–I will never be a man; *the pleasure will never be mine.*

There's more to the black sea than I know.

The air is numbing here.
I'd write you sonnet, Ma –but I can no longer feel the pen.

Calliope 2013 Contributors

Maryam Alrisheh is a Business Administration student. She is a Palestinian who has lived in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and U.A.E. She loves to write and uses her writing talent to express her emotions and personal experiences. She is interested in learning the Saudi accent and using it.

Angeles (Angie) Arredondo is from Mexico. This is her first submission to Calliope. She spent last year in the ESL program at NOVA and intends to apply to the Medical Laboratory Technology program in Fall of 2013. She is excited about the opportunity to share her writing in Calliope.

Edcel Bondoc is an international student from the Philippines who is majoring in Engineering. This is her second year in the US and her first submission to Calliope. Edcel's hobbies are lettering, reading, and writing poems.

Amanda Crane is a 2nd year student studying to be an interpreter for the deaf and hard of hearing. She will graduate in the fall of 2013. One of her poems, Seasons, has been published before. She spends her time focusing on family, boyfriend, friends, and school, and tries as much as she can to engage in the deaf community. Amanda enjoys writing poetry and painting.

Khadija Jenkins is a 1st year Liberal Arts student who will transfer to George Mason. She is an aspiring writer, artist, and dancer. This is her first time sharing any of her pieces, and is happy to know that people may read and gain inspiration from her work.

Evan McLees is a Liberal Arts major hoping to transfer to George Mason in the fall to pursue a Film degree. She was born in Mexico City and has lived in Russia and Africa where her father was a foreign- service officer. Evan's interests include film, television, music and baseball.

Bruno Ortega-Toledo is a first year student at NOVA. He will transfer to William & Mary in the fall of 2014. He served as copy editor for his high school newspaper and wrote its editorials. Bruno's passion for video games borders on addiction, but he absolutely loves writing.

Vy Phan is an international student and a freshman at NOVA. She is majoring in Science and her dream is to work in the medical field. "Bottle Caps" is her first ever work in literature. The story is based on a childhood memory which changed her life forever.

Elise Rossi is a 2nd year Electrical Engineering student planning to transfer to

the University of Virginia to complete her bachelor's degree. She was homeschooled in elementary and high schools. Three of her poems were published in Calliope 2012. Besides her love of writing, she plays the violin and the mandolin with her family.

Robert C. Trexler is a retired human factors scientist who now studies writing at NOVA. One of his poems was published in The Poet's Domain in 2005, and more recently, his first short story was published in Calliope 2012, V0L IX. Robert's hobbies include painting and sculpting.

Dawnielle Woodman is a 2nd year student planning to major in geography at the University of Mary Washington. She wants to become a college professor. Dawnielle has been writing since she was fourteen, but this is her first publication. Her other hobbies include crocheting, painting, traveling, and singing.